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# THE BROWNIES AND OTHER STORIES

THE CHILDREN'S ILLUSTRATED CLASSICS

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'THE BROWNIES . . . CAN RUN AND JUMP, AND ROLL AND TUMBLE . . .

## THE BROWNIES

AND OTHER STORIES

by
Mrs J. H. Ewing



Illustrated with 8 colour plates, and line drawings in the text by E. H. SHEPARD

LONDON: J. M. DENT & SONS LTD NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO. INC.

JULIANA HORATIA EWING was born in 1841

and died in 1885.

She was the second daughter of the famous Mrs Alfred Gatty, who wrote 'Parables from Nature,' and was brought up with all her many brothers and sisters at Ecclesfield Vicarage in Yorkshire. When she was twenty-six she married Captain Ewing, and for the first two years of her married life lived in Canada.

It was when she was only twenty-three that she had her first real success with a children's story—'The Brownies'—published in the 'Monthly Packet,' and illustrated by George Cruikshank. From this tale fifty years later Sir Robert Baden-Powell, as he then was, took the name and idea for the junior branch of the Girl Guide Movement, which he was planning at that time.

Mrs Ewing contributed a number of stories to a periodical—'Aunt Judy's Magazine'—edited by her mother, who published one hundred or more of her daughter's tales, such as 'Amelia and the Dwarfs' (1870), 'A Flat Iron for a Farthing' (1870–1), 'Jan of the Windmill' (first known as 'The Miller's Thumb') (1872–3), 'Jackanapes' (1879), 'Daddy Darwin's Dovecote' (1881), 'The Story of a Short Life' (1882), and very many others.

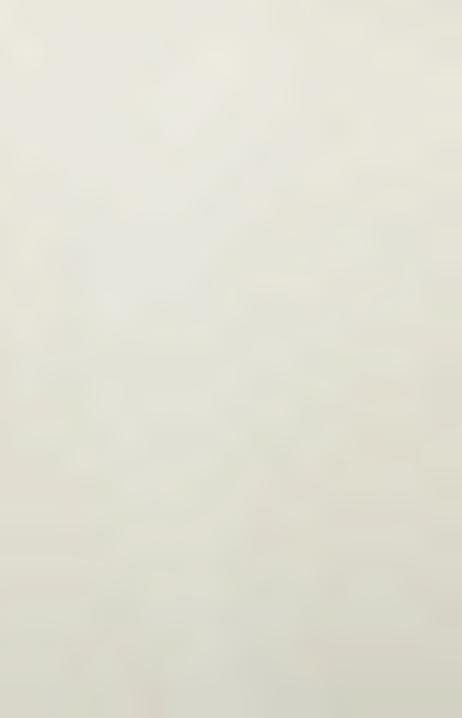
Almost all these tales were later published in book form.

#### DEDICATED

TO

## MY VERY DEAR AND HONOURED MOTHER

1871 J.H.E.



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## THE BROWNIES

A LITTLE girl sat sewing and crying on a garden seat. She had fair floating hair, which the breeze blew into her eyes, and between the cloud of hair, and the mist of tears, she could not see her work very clearly. She neither tied up her locks nor dried her eyes, however; for when one is miserable, one may as well be completely so.

'What is the matter?' said the doctor, who was a friend of the rector's, and came into the garden whenever he

pleased.

The doctor was a tall stout man, with hair as black as crows' feathers on the top, and grey underneath, and a bushy beard. When young, he had been slim and handsome, with wonderful eyes, which were wonderful still; but that was many years past. He had a great love for children, and this one was a particular friend of his.

'What is the matter?' said he.

'I'm in a row,' murmured the young lady through her veil; and the needle went in damp, and came out with a jerk, which is apt to result in what ladies called 'puckering.'

'You are like London in a yellow fog,' said the doctor, throwing himself on to the grass, 'and it is very depressing to my feelings. What is the row about, and how came you to get into it?'

'We're all in it,' was the reply; and apparently the fog was thickening, for the voice grew less and less distinct—'the boys and everybody. It's all about forgetting, and not

putting away, and leaving about, and borrowing, and breaking, and that sort of thing. 'I've had father's new pocket handkerchiefs to hem, and I've been out climbing with the boys, and kept forgetting and forgetting, and mother says I always forget; and I can't help it. I forget to tidy his newspapers for him, and I forget to feed puss, and I forgot these; besides, they're a great bore, and Mother gave them to Nurse to do, and this one was lost, and we found it this morning tossing about in the toy-cupboard.'

'It looks as if it had been taking violent exercise,' said

the doctor. 'But what have the boys to do with it?'

'Why, then there was a regular turn out of the toys,' she explained, 'and they're all in a regular mess. You know, we always go on till the last minute, and then things get crammed in anyhow. Mary and I did tidy them once or twice; but the boys never put anything away, you know, so what's the good?'

'What, indeed!' said the doctor. 'And so you have

complained of them?'

'Oh, no!' answered she. 'We don't get them into rows, unless they are very provoking; but some of the things were theirs, so everybody was sent for, and I was sent out to finish this, and they are all tidying. I don't know when it will be done, for I have all this side to hem; and the soldiers' box is broken, and Noah is lost out of the Noah's Ark, and so is one of the elephants and a guinea-pig, and so is the rocking-horse's nose; and nobody knows what has become of Rutlandshire and The Wash, but they're so small, I don't wonder: only North America and Europe are gone too.'

The doctor started up in affected horror. 'Europe gone, did you say? Bless me! what will become of us!'

'Don't!' said the young lady, kicking petulantly with her

dangling feet, and trying not to laugh. 'You know I mean the puzzles; and if they were yours, you wouldn't like it.'
'I don't half like it as it is,' said the doctor. 'I am

seriously alarmed. An earthquake is one thing: you have a good shaking, and settle down again. But Europe gone... lost... Why, here comes Deordie, I declare, looking much more cheerful than we do; let us humbly hope that Europe has been found. At present I feel like Aladdin when his palace had been transported by the magician; I don't know where I am.'

'You're here, Doctor, aren't you?' asked the slow curly wigged brother, squatting himself on the grass.

'Is Europe found?' said the doctor tragically.

'Yes,' laughed Deordie. 'I found it.'

'You will be a great man,' said the doctor. 'And—it is only common charity to ask-how about North America?'

'Found too,' said Deordie. 'But The Wash is com-

pletely lost.'

'And my six shirts in it!' said the doctor. 'I sent them last Saturday as ever was. What a world we live in! Any more news? Poor Tiny here has been crying her eyes out.'

'I'm so sorry, Tiny,' said the brother. 'But don't bother about it. It's all square now, and we're going to have a new shelf put up.'

'Have you found everything?' asked Tiny.

'Well, not The Wash, you know. And the elephant and the guinea-pig are gone for good; so the other elephant and the guinea-pig are gone for good, so the other original and the other guinea-pig must walk together as a pair now. Noah was among the soldiers, and we have put the cavalry into a night-light box. Europe and North America were behind the book-case; and, would you believe it? the rocking-horse's nose has turned up in the nursery oven.'
'I can't believe it,' said the doctor. 'The rocking-horse's

nose couldn't turn up, it was the purest Grecian, modelled from the Elgin marbles. Perhaps it was the heat that did it, though. However, you seem to have got through your troubles very well, Master Deordie. I wish poor Tiny were at the end of her task.'

'So do I,' said Deordie ruefully. 'But I tell you what I've been thinking, Doctor. Nurse is always nagging at us, and we're always in rows of one sort or another, for doing this, and not doing that, and leaving our things about. But, you know, it's a horrid shame, for there are plenty of servants, and I don't see why we should be always bothering to do little things, and——'

'Oh! come to the point, please,' said the doctor; 'you do go round the square so in telling your stories, Deordie.

What have you been thinking of?'

'Well,' said Deordie, who was as good-tempered as he was slow, 'the other day Nurse shut me up in the back nursery for borrowing her scissors and losing them; but I'd got "Grimm" inside one of my knickerbockers, so when she locked the door, I sat down to read. And I read the story of the shoemaker and the little elves who came and did his work for him before he got up; and I thought it would be so jolly if we had some little elves to do things instead of us.'

'That's what Tommy Trout said,' observed the doctor.

'Who's Tommy Trout?' asked Deordie.

'Don't you know, Deor?' said Tiny. 'It's the good boy who pulled the cat out of the what's-his-name.

'Who pulled her out? Little Tommy Trout.

Is it the same Tommy Trout, Doctor? I never heard anything else about him except his pulling the cat out; and I can't think how he did that.'

'Let down the bucket for her, of course,' said the doctor. 'But listen to me. If you will get that handkerchief done, and take it to your mother with a kiss, and not keep me waiting, I'll have you all to tea, and tell you the story of Tommy Trout.'

'This very night?' shouted Deordie.

'This very night.'

'Every one of us?' inquired the young gentleman with rapturous incredulity.

'Every one of you. Now, Tiny, how about that work?'
'It's just done,' said Tiny. 'Oh! Deordie, climb up
behind and hold back my hair, there's a darling, while I
fasten off. Oh! Deor, you're pulling my hair out. Don't.'

'I want to make a pigtail,' said Deor.

'You can't,' said Tiny, with feminine contempt. 'You can't plait. What's the good of asking boys to do anything? There! it's done at last. Now go and ask Mother if we may go. Will you let me come, Doctor,' she inquired, 'if I do as you said?'

'To be sure I will,' he answered. 'Let me look at you. Your eyes are swollen with crying. How can you be such a silly little goose?'

'Did you never cry?' asked Tiny.

'When I was your age? Well, perhaps so.'

'You've never cried since, surely,' said Tiny.

The doctor absolutely blushed. 'What do you think?' said he.

'Oh, of course not,' she answered. 'You've nothing to cry about. You're grown up, and you live all alone in a beautiful house, and you do as you like, and never get into rows, or have anybody but yourself to think about; and no nasty pocket handkerchiefs to hem.'

'Very nice: eh, Deordie?' said the doctor.

'Awfully jolly,' said Deordie.

'Nothing else to wish for, eh?'

'I should keep harriers, and not a poodle, if I were a man,' said Deordie; 'but I suppose you could, if you wanted to.'

'Nothing to cry about, at any rate?'

'I should think not!' said Deordie. 'There's mother, though; let's go and ask her about the tea'; and off they ran. The doctor stretched his six feet of length upon the

The doctor stretched his six feet of length upon the sward, dropped his grey head on a little heap of newly mown grass, and looked up into the sky.

'Awfully jolly—no nasty pocket handkerchiefs to hem,' said he, laughing to himself. 'Nothing else to wish for;

nothing to cry about.'

Nevertheless, he lay still, staring at the sky, till the smile died away, and tears came into his eyes. Fortunately, no one was there to see.

What could this 'awfully jolly' doctor be thinking of to make him cry? He was thinking of a grave-stone in the churchyard close by, and of a story connected with this grave-stone which was known to everybody in the place who was old enough to remember it. This story has nothing to do with the present story, so it ought not to be told.

And yet it has to do with the doctor, and is very short, so it shall be put in, after all.

## THE STORY OF A GRAVE-STONE

One early spring morning, about twenty years before, a man going to his work at sunrise through the churchyard, stopped by a flat stone which he had lately helped to lay down. The day before, a name had been cut on it, which he stayed to read; and below the name someone had

scrawled a few words in pencil, which he read also—Pitifully behold the sorrows of our hearts. On the stone lay a pencil, and a few feet from it lay the doctor, face downwards, as he had lain all night, with the hoar-frost on his black hair.

Ah! these grave-stones (they were ugly things in those days; not the light, hopeful, pretty crosses we set up now), how they seem remorselessly to imprison and keep our dear dead friends away from us! And yet they do not lie with a feather's weight upon the souls that are gone, while God only knows how heavily they press upon the souls that are left behind. Did the spirit whose body was with the dead, stand that morning by the body whose spirit was with the dead, and pity him? Let us only talk about what we know.

After this it was said that the doctor had got a fever, and was dying, but he got better of it; and then that he was out of his mind, but he got better of that, and came out looking much as usual, except that his hair never seemed quite so black again, as if a little of that night's hoar-frost still remained. And no further misfortune happened to him that I ever heard of; and as time went on he grew a beard, and got stout, and kept a German poodle, and gave tea-parties to other people's children. As to the grave-stone story, whatever it was to him at the end of twenty years, it was a great convenience to his friends; for when he said anything they didn't agree with, or did anything they couldn't understand, or didn't say or do what was expected of him, what could be easier or more conclusive than to shake one's head and say:

'The fact is, our doctor has been a little odd, ever

since-!'

## THE DOCTOR'S TEA-PARTY

There is one great advantage attendant upon invitations to tea with a doctor. No objections can be raised on the score of health. It is obvious that it must be fine enough to go out when the doctor asks you, and that his tea-cakes

may be eaten with perfect impunity.

Those tea-cakes were always good: to-night they were utterly delicious; there was a perfect abandon of currants, and the amount of citron peel was enervating to behold. Then the housekeeper waited in awful splendour, and yet the doctor's authority over her seemed as absolute as if he were an Eastern despot. Deordie must be excused for believing in the charms of living alone. It certainly has its advantages. The limited sphere of duty conduces to discipline in the household, demand does not exceed supply in the article of waiting, and there is not that general scrimmage of conflicting interests which besets a large family in the most favoured circumstances. The housekeeper waits in black silk, and looks as if she had no meaner occupation than to sit in a rocking-chair and dream of damson cheese.

Rustling, hospitable, and subservient, this one retired at last and:

'Now,' said the doctor, 'for the veranda; and to look at the moon.'

The company adjourned with a rush, the rear being brought up by the poodle, who seemed quite used to the proceedings; and there under the veranda, framed with passion-flowers and geraniums, the doctor had gathered mats, rugs, cushions, and arm-chairs for the party; while far up in the sky, a yellow-faced harvest moon looked down in awful benignity.

'Now!' said the doctor. 'Take your seats. Ladies first, and gentlemen afterwards. Mary and Tiny, race for the American rocking-chair. Well done! Of course it will hold both. Now, boys, shake down. No one is to sit on the stone, or put his feet on the grass; and when you're ready, I'll begin.'

'We're ready,' said the girls.

The boys shook down in a few minutes more, and the doctor began the story of

#### THE BROWNIES

'Bairns are a burden,' said the tailor to himself as he sat at work. He lived in a village on some of the glorious moors of the north of England; and by bairns he meant children, as every northman knows.

'Bairns are a burden,' and he sighed.

'Bairns are a blessing,' said the old lady in the window. 'It is the family motto. The Trouts have had large families and good luck for generations; that is, till your grandfather's time. He had one only son. I married him. He was a good husband, but he had been a spoilt child. He had always been used to be waited upon, and he couldn't fash to look after the farm when it was his own. We had six children. They are all dead but you, who were the youngest. You were bound to a tailor. When the farm came into your hands your wife died, and you have never looked up since. The land is sold now, but not the house. No! no! you're right enough there; but you've had your troubles, son Thomas, and the lads are idle!'

It was the tailor's mother who spoke. She was a very old woman, and helpless. She was not quite so bright in her intellect as she had been, and got muddled over things that had lately happened; but she had a clear memory for what was long past, and was very pertinacious in her opinions. She knew the private history of almost every family in the place, and who of the Trouts were buried under which old stones in the churchyard; and had more tales of ghosts, doubles, warnings, fairies, witches, hobgoblins, and such like, than even her grandchildren had ever come to the end of. Her hands trembled with age, and she regretted this for nothing more than for the danger it brought her into of spilling the salt. She was past housework, but all day she sat knitting hearth-rugs out of the bits and scraps of cloth that were shred in the tailoring. How far she believed in the wonderful tales she told, and the odd little charms she practised, no one exactly knew; but the older she grew, the stranger were the things she remembered, and the more testy she was if anyone doubted their truth.

'Bairns are a blessing!' said she. 'It is the family motto.

"Are they?" said the tailor emphatically.

He had a high respect for his mother, and did not like to contradict her, but he held his own opinion, based upon personal experience; and not being a metaphysician, did not understand that it is safer to found opinions on principles than on experience, since experience may alter, but principles ciples cannot.

'Look at Tommy,' he broke out suddenly. 'That boy does nothing but whittle sticks from morning till night. I have almost to lug him out of bed o' mornings. If I send him an errand, he loiters; I'd better have gone myself. If I set him to do anything, I have to tell him everything; I could sooner do it myself. And if he does work, it's done so unwillingly, with such a poor grace; better, far better, to

do it myself. What housework do the boys ever do but looking after the baby? And this afternoon she was asleep in the cradle, and off they went, and when she awoke, I must leave my work to take her. I gave her her supper and put her to bed. And what with what they want and I have to get, and what they take out to play with and lose, and what they bring in to play with and leave about, bairns give some trouble, Mother, and I've not an easy life of it. The pay is poor enough when one can get the work, and the work is hard enough when one has a clear day to do it in; but housekeeping and bairn-minding don't leave a man much time for his trade. No! no! ma'am, the luck of the Trouts is gone, and "Bairns are a burden," is the motto now. Though they are one's own,' he muttered to himself, 'and not bad ones, and I did hope once would have been a blessing.'

'There's Johnnie,' murmured the old lady dreamily.

'He has a face like an apple.'

'And is about as useful,' said the tailor. 'He might have

been different, but his brother leads him by the nose.'

His brother led him in as the tailor spoke, not literally by his snub, though, but by the hand. They were a handsome pair, this lazy couple. Johnnie especially had the largest and roundest of foreheads, the reddest of cheeks, the brightest of eyes, the quaintest and most twitchy of chins, and looked altogether like a gutta-percha cherub in a chronic state of longitudinal squeeze. They were locked together by two grubby paws, and had each an armful of moss, which they deposited on the floor as they came in.

'I've swept this floor once to-day,' said the father, 'and I'm not going to do it again. Put that rubbish outside.'

'Move it, Johnnie!' said his brother, seating himself on a stool, and taking out his knife and a piece of wood, at which he cut and sliced; while the apple-cheeked Johnnie stumbled and stamped over the moss, and scraped it out on the doorstep, leaving long trails of earth behind him, and then sat down also.

'And those chips the same,' added the tailor; 'I will not

clear up the litter you lads make.'

'Pick 'em up, Johnnie,' said Thomas Trout, junior, with an exasperated sigh; and the apple tumbled up, rolled after the flying chips, and tumbled down again.

'Is there any supper, Father?' asked Tommy.

'No, there is not, sir, unless you know how to get it,' said the tailor; and taking his pipe, he went out of the house.

'Is there really nothing to eat, Granny?' asked the boy.

'No, my bairn, only some bread for breakfast to-morrow.'

'What makes Father so cross, Granny?'

'He's wearied, and you don't help him, my dear.'

'What could I do, Grandmother?'

'Many little things, if you tried,' said the old lady. 'He spent half an hour to-day, while you were on the moor, getting turf for the fire, and you could have got it just as well, and he been at his work.'

'He never told me,' said Tommy.

'You might help me a bit just now, if you would, my laddie,' said the old lady coaxingly; 'these bits of cloth want tearing into lengths, and if you get 'em ready, I can go on knitting. There'll be some food when this mat is done and sold.'

'I'll try,' said Tommy, lounging up with desperate resignation. 'Hold my knife, Johnnie. Father's been cross, and everything has been miserable, ever since the farm was sold. I wish I were a big man, and could make a fortune. Will that do, Granny?'

The old lady put down her knitting and looked. 'My dear, that's too short. Bless me! I gave the lad a piece to measure by.'

'I thought it was the same length. Oh, dear! I am so tired'; and he propped himself against the old lady's chair.

'My dear! don't lean so; you'll tipple me over!' she

shrieked.

'I beg your pardon, Grandmother. Will that do?'

'It's that much too long.'

'Tear that bit off. Now it's all right.'

'But, my dear, that wastes it. Now that bit is of no use. There goes my knitting, you awkward lad!'

'Johnnie, pick it up!-Oh! Grandmother, I am so

hungry.'

The boy's eyes filled with tears, and the old lady was melted in an instant.

'What can I do for you, my poor bairns?' said she. 'There, never mind the scraps, Tommy.'

'Tell us a tale, Granny. If you told us a new one I shouldn't keep thinking of that bread in the cupboard.

Come, Johnnie, and sit against me. Now then!'

'I doubt if there's one of my old-world cracks I haven't told you,' said the old lady, 'unless it's a queer ghost story was told me years ago of that house in the hollow with the blocked-up windows.'

'Oh! not ghosts!' Tommy broke in. 'We've had so many. I know it was a rattling, or a scratching, or a knocking, or a figure in white; and if it turns out a tombstone or a

white petticoat, I hate it.'

'It was nothing of the sort as a tombstone,' said the old lady with dignity. 'It's a good half-mile from the church-yard. And as to white petticoats, there wasn't a female in the house: he wouldn't have one; and his victuals came in

by the pantry window. But never mind! Though it's as true as a sermon.'

Johnnie lifted his head from his brother's knee.

'Let Granny tell what she likes, Tommy. It's a new ghost, and I should like to know who he was, and why his

victuals came in by the window.'

'I don't like a story about victuals,' sulked Tommy. 'It makes me think of the bread. Oh, Granny dear! do tell us a fairy story. You never will tell us about the fairies, and I know you know.'

'Hush! hush!' said the old lady. 'There's Miss Sur-

biton's love-letter, and her dreadful end.'

'I know Miss Surbiton, Granny. I think she was a goose. Why don't you tell us about the fairies?'

'Hush! hush! my dear. There's the clerk and the

corpse-candles.'

'I know the corpse-candles, Granny. Besides, they make Johnnie dream, and he wakes me to keep him company. Why won't you tell us about the fairies?'

'My dear, they don't like it,' said the old lady.

'Oh, Granny dear, why don't they? Do tell! I shouldn't think of the bread a bit if you told us about the fairies. I know nothing about them.'

'He lived in this house long enough,' said the old lady.

'But it's not lucky to name him.'

'Oh, Granny, we are so hungry and miserable, what can it matter?'

'Well, that's true enough,' she sighed. 'Trouts' luck is gone; it went with the brownie, I believe.'

'Was that he, Granny?'

'Yes, my dear, he lived with the Trouts for several generations.'

'What was he like, Granny?'

'Like a little man, they say, my dear.'

'What did he do?'

'He came in before the family were up, and swept up the hearth, and lighted the fire, and set out the breakfast, and tidied the room, and did all sorts of housework. But he never would be seen, and was off before they could catch him. But they could hear him laughing and playing about the house sometimes.'

'What a darling! Did they give him any wages,

Granny?'

'No! my dear. He did it for love. They set a pancheon of clear water for him overnight, and now and then a bowl of bread and milk, or cream. He liked that, for he was very dainty. Sometimes he left a bit of money in the water. Sometimes he weeded the garden, or threshed the corn. He saved endless trouble, both to men and maids.'

'Oh, Granny! why did he go?'

'The maids caught sight of him one night, my dear, and his coat was so ragged that they got a new suit and a linen shirt for him, and laid them by the bread-and-milk bowl. But when Brownie saw the things, he put them on, and dancing round the kitchen, sang:

"What have we here? Hemten hamten! Here will I never more tread nor stampen,"

and so danced through the door, and never came back again.'

'Oh, Grandmother! But why not? Didn't he like the new clothes?'

'The Old Owl knows, my dear; I don't.'

'Who's the Old Owl, Granny?'

'I don't exactly know, my dear. It's what my mother used to say when we asked anything that puzzled her. It was said that the Old Owl was Nanny Besom (a witch, my

dear!), who took the shape of a bird but couldn't change her voice, and that's why the owl sits silent all day for fear she should betray herself by speaking, and has no singing voice like other birds. Many people used to go and consult the Old Owl at moonrise, in my young days.'

'Did you ever go, Granny?'

'Once, very nearly, my dear.'

'Oh! tell us, Granny dear. There are no corpse-candles, Johnnie; it's only moonlight,' he added consolingly, as Johnnie crept closer to his knee, and pricked his little red ears.

'It was when your grandfather was courting me, my dears,' said the old lady, 'and I couldn't quite make up my mind. So I went to my mother and said: "He's this on the one side, but then he's that on the other, and so on. Shall I say yes or no?" And my mother said: "The Old Owl knows"; for she was fairly puzzled. So says I: "I'll go and ask her to-night, as sure as the moon rises."

'So at moonrise I went, and there in the white light by the gate stood your grandfather. "What are you doing here at this time o' night?" says I. "Watching your window," says he. "What are you doing here at this time o' night?" "The Old Owl knows," said I, and burst out crying."

'What for?' said Johnnie.

'I can't rightly tell you, my dear,' said the old lady, 'but it gave me such a turn to see him. And without more ado your grandfather kissed me. "How dare you?" said I. "What do you mean?" "The Old Owl knows," said he. So we never went.'

'How stupid!' said Tommy.

'Tell us more about Brownie, please,' said Johnnie.
'Did he ever live with anybody else?'

'There are plenty of brownies,' said the old lady, 'or

used to be in my mother's young days. Some houses had several.'

'Oh! I wish ours would come back!' cried both the boys in chorus. 'He'd——

'Tidy the room,' said Johnnie; 'Fetch the turf,' said Tommy;

'Pick up the chips,' said Johnnie;

'Sort your scraps,' said Tommy;

'And do everything. Oh! I wish he hadn't gone away.'

'What's that?' said the tailor, coming in at this moment.

'lt's the brownie, Father,' said Tommy. 'We are so sorry he went, and do so wish we had one.'

'What nonsense have you been telling them, Mother?'

asked the tailor.

'Heighty teighty,' said the old lady, bristling. 'Non-sense, indeed! As good men as you, son Thomas, would as soon have jumped off the crags as spoken lightly of them, in my mother's young days.'

'Well, well,' said the tailor, 'I beg their pardon. They never did aught for me, whatever they did for my forbears; but they're as welcome to the old place as ever, if they

choose to come. There's plenty to do.'

'Would you mind our setting a pan of water, Father?' asked Tommy very gently. 'There's no bread and milk.'

'You may set what you like, my lad,' said the tailor; 'and I wish there were bread and milk, for your sakes, bairns. You should have it had I got it. But go to bed now.'

They lugged out a pancheon and filled it with more dexterity than usual, and then went off to bed, leaving the knife in one corner, the wood in another, and a few splashes of water in their track.

There was more room than comfort in the ruined old farmhouse, and the two boys slept on a bed of cut heather,



'Come up here! Come up here!' said the Old Owl

in what had been the old malt-loft. Johnnie was soon in the land of dreams, growing rosier and rosier as he slept, a tumbled apple among the grey heather. But not so lazy Tommy. The idea of a domesticated brownie had taken full possession of his mind; and whither Brownie had gone, where he might be found, and what would induce him to return, were mysteries he longed to solve. 'There's an owl living in the old shed by the mere,' he thought. 'It may be the Old Owl herself, and she knows, Granny says. When Father's gone to bed and the moon rises I'll go.' Meanwhile he lay down.

The moon rose like gold, and went up into the heavens like silver, flooding the moors with a pale ghostly light, taking the colour out of the heather and painting black shadows under the stone walls. Tommy opened his eyes and ran to the window. 'The moon has risen,' said he, and crept softly down the ladder, through the kitchen, where was the pan of water, but no brownie, and so out on to the moor. The air was fresh, not to say chilly; but it was a glorious night, though everything but the wind and Tommy seemed asleep. The stones, the walls, the gleaming lanes were so intensely still; the church tower in the valley seemed awake and watching, but silent; the houses in the village round it had all their eyes shut, that is, their window-blinds down; and it seemed to Tommy as if the very moors had drawn white sheets over them, and lay sleeping also.

'Hoot! hoot!' said a voice from the fir plantation behind him. Somebody else was awake, then. 'It's the Old Owl,' said Tommy; and there she came, swinging heavily across the moor with a flapping stately flight, and sailed into the shed by the mere. The old lady moved faster than she seemed to do, and though Tommy ran hard she was in the shed some time before him. When he got in, no bird was to be seen, but he heard a crunching sound from above, and looking up, there sat the Old Owl, pecking and tearing and munching at some shapeless black object, and blinking at him—Tommy—with yellow eyes.

'Oh, dear!' said Tommy, for he didn't much like it.

The Old Owl dropped the black mass on to the floor; and Tommy did not care somehow to examine it.

'Come up! come up!' said she hoarsely.

She could speak, then! Beyond all doubt it was the Old Owl, and none other. Tommy shuddered.

'Come up here! Come up here!' said the Old Owl.

The Old Owl sat on a beam that ran across the shed. Tommy had often climbed up for fun; and he climbed up now, and sat face to face with her, and thought her eyes looked as if they were made of flame.

'Kiss my fluffy face,' said the owl.

Her eyes were going round like flaming Catherine-wheels, but there are certain requests which one has not the option of refusing. Tommy crept nearer, and put his



lips to the round face out of which the eyes shone. Oh! it was so downy and warm, so soft, so indescribably soft. Tommy's lips sank into it, and couldn't get to the bottom. It was unfathomable feathers and fluffiness.

'Now, what do you want,' said the owl.

'Please,' said Tommy, who felt rather reassured, 'can you tell me where to find the brownies, and how to get one to come and live with us?"

'Oohoo!' said the owl, 'that's it, is it? I know of three brownies.'

'Hurrah!' said Tommy. 'Where do they live?'

'In your house,' said the owl.

Tommy was aghast.

'In our house!' he exclaimed. 'Whereabouts? Let me rummage them out. Why do they do nothing?'

'One of them is too young,' said the owl.

'But why don't the others work?' asked Tommy.

'They are idle, they are idle,' said the Old Owl, and she gave herself such a shake as she said it, that the fluff went flying through the shed, and Tommy nearly tumbled off the beam in his fright.

'Then we don't want them,' said he. 'What is the use

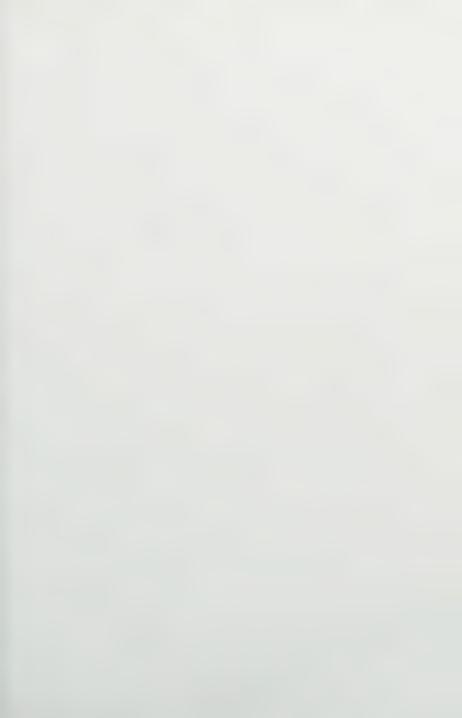
of having brownies if they do nothing to help us?'

'Perhaps they don't know how, as no one has told them,' said the owl.

'I wish you would tell me where to find them,' said Tommy; 'I could tell them.'

'Could you?' said the owl. 'Oohoo! oohoo!' and

Tommy couldn't tell whether she were hooting or laughing. 'Of course I could,' he said. 'They might be up and sweep the house, and light the fire, and spread the table, and that sort of thing, before Father came down. Besides, they could see what was wanted. The brownies did all





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'TELL US A TALE, GRANNY . . . '

that in Granny's mother's young days. And then they could tidy the room, and fetch the turf, and pick up my chips, and sort Granny's scraps. Oh! there's lots to do.'

'So there is,' said the owl. 'Oohoo! Well, I can tell

'So there is,' said the owl. 'Oohoo! Well, I can tell you where to find one of the brownies; and if you find him he will tell you where his brother is. But all this depends upon whether you feel equal to undertaking it, and whether you will follow my directions.'

'I am quite ready to go,' said Tommy, 'and I will do as you shall tell me. I feel sure I could persuade them. If they only knew how everyone would love them if they made

themselves useful!'

'Oohoo! oohoo!' said the owl. 'Now pay attention. You must go to the north side of the mere when the moon is shining—("I know brownies like water," muttered Tommy.)—and turn yourself round three times, saying this charm:

Twist me, and turn me, and show me the Elf—I looked in the water and saw—

When you have got so far look into the water, and at the same moment you will see the brownie, and think of a word that will fill up the couplet, and rhyme with the first line. If either you do not see the brownie, or fail to think of the word, it will be of no use.'

'Is the brownie a merman,' said Tommy, wriggling

himself along the beam, 'that he lives under water?'

'That depends on whether he has a fish's tail,' said the

owl, 'and this you can discover for yourself.'

'Well, the moon is shining, so I shall go,' said Tommy. 'Good-bye, and thank you, ma'am'; and he jumped down and went, saying to himself as he ran: 'I believe he is a merman all the same, or else how could he live in the mere? I know more about brownies than Granny does, and I shall

tell her so'; for Tommy was somewhat opinionated, like

other young people.

The moon shone very brightly on the centre of the mere. Tommy knew the place well, for there was a fine echo there. Round the edge grew rushes and water plants, which cast a border of shadow. Tommy went to the north side, and turning himself three times, as the Old Owl had told him, he repeated the charm:

'Twist me, and turn me, and show me the Elf—I looked in the water, and saw—'

Now for it! He looked in, and saw—the reflection of his own face.

'Why, there's no one but myself!' said Tommy. 'And what can the word be? I must have done it wrong.'

'Wrong!' said the echo.

Tommy was almost surprised to find the echo awake at

this time of night.

'Hold your tongue!' said he. 'Matters are provoking enough of themselves. Belf! Celf! Delf! Felf! Gelf! Helf! Jelf! What rubbish! There can't be a word to fit it. And then to look for a brownie and see nothing but myself!'

'Myself,' said the echo.

'Will you be quiet?' said Tommy. 'If you would tell one the word there would be some sense in your interference; but to roar "Myself!" at one, which neither rhymes nor runs—it does rhyme though, as it happens,' he added; 'and how very odd! it runs too:

Twist me, and turn me, and show me the Elf—I looked in the water, and saw myself,

which I certainly did. What can it mean? The Old Owl

knows, as Granny would say; so I shall go back and ask her.'

'Ask her!' said the echo.

'Didn't I say I should?' said Tommy. 'How exasperating you are! It is very strange. Myself certainly does rhyme, and I wonder I did not think of it long ago.'

'Go,' said the echo.

'Will you mind your own business, and go to sleep?' said Tommy. 'I am going; I said I should.'

And back he went. There sat the Old Owl as before.

'Oohoo!' said she, as Tommy climbed up. 'What did you see in the mere?'

'I saw nothing but myself,' said Tommy indignantly.

'And what did you expect to see?' asked the owl.

'I expected to see a brownie,' said Tommy; 'you told me so.'

'And what are brownies like, pray?' inquired the owl.

'The one Granny knew was a useful little fellow, some-

thing like a little man,' said Tommy.

'Ah!' said the owl, 'but you know at present this one is an idle little fellow, something like a little man. Oohoo! oohoo! Are you quite sure you didn't see him?'

'Quite,' answered Tommy sharply. 'I saw no one but

myself.'

'Hoot! toot! How touchy we are! And who are you, pray?'

'I'm not a brownie,' said Tommy.

'Don't be too sure,' said the owl. 'Did you find out the word?'

'No,' said Tommy. 'I could find no word with any

meaning that would rhyme but "myself."

'Well, that runs and rhymes,' said the owl. 'What do you want? Where's your brother now?'

'In bed in the malt-loft,' said Tommy.

'Then now all your questions are answered,' said the owl, 'and you know what wants doing so go and do it. Good night, or rather good morning, for it is long past midnight'; and the old lady began to shake her feathers for a start.

'Don't go yet, please,' said Tommy humbly. 'I don't

understand it. You know I'm not a brownie, am I?'

'Yes, you are,' said the owl, 'and a very idle one too. All children are brownies.'

'But I couldn't do work like a brownie,' said Tommy.

'Why not?' inquired the owl. 'Couldn't you sweep the floor, light the fire, spread the table, tidy the room, fetch the turf, pick up your own chips, and sort your grand-mother's scraps? You know "there's lots to do."

'But I don't think I should like it,' said Tommy. 'I'd

much rather have a brownie to do it for me.'

'And what would you do meanwhile?' asked the owl. 'Be idle, I suppose; and what do you suppose is the use of a man's having children if they do nothing to help him? Ah! if they only knew how everyone would love them if they made themselves useful!'

'But is it really and truly so?' asked Tommy, in a dismal voice. 'Are there no brownies but children?'

'No, there are not,' said the owl. 'And pray do you think that the brownies, whoever they may be, come into the house to save trouble for the idle healthy little boys who live in it? Listen to me, Tommy,' said the old lady, her eyes shooting rays of fire in the dark corner where she sat. 'Listen to me, you are a clever boy, and can understand when one speaks; so I will tell you the whole history of the brownies, as it has been handed down in our family from my grandmother's great-grandmother, who lived in the Druid's Oak, and was intimate with the fairies. And when

I have done you shall tell me what you think they are, if they are not children. It's the opinion I have come to at any rate, and I don't think that wisdom died with our great-grandmothers.'

'I should like to hear, if you please,' said Tommy.

The Old Owl shook out a tuft or two of fluff, and set her

eyes a-going and began:

'The brownies, or, as they are sometimes called, the Small People, the Little People, or the Good People, are a race of tiny beings who domesticate themselves in a house of which some grown-up human being pays the rent and taxes. They are like small editions of men and women, they are too small and fragile for heavy work; they have not the strength of a man, but are a thousand times more fresh and nimble. They can run and jump, and roll and tumble, with marvellous agility and endurance, and of many of the aches and pains which men and women groan under, they do not even know the names. They have no trade or profession, and as they live entirely upon other people, they know nothing of domestic cares; in fact, they know very know nothing of domestic cares; in fact, they know very little upon any subject, though they are often intelligent and highly inquisitive. They love dainties, play, and mischief. They are apt to be greatly beloved, and are themselves capriciously affectionate. They are little people and can only do little things. When they are idle and mischievous they are called Boggarts, and are a curse to the house they live in. When they are useful and considerate they are brownies, and are a much-coveted blessing. Sometimes the blessed brownies will take up their abode with some worthy couple, cheer them with their romps and merry laughter, tidy the house, find things that have been lost, and take little troubles out of hands full of great anxieties. Then in time these Little People are brownies no longer. They grow up into men and women. They do not care so much for dainties, play, or mischief. They cease to jump and tumble and roll about the house. They know more and laugh less. Then, when their heads begin to ache with anxiety, and they have to labour for their own living, and the great cares of life come on, other brownies come and live with them, and take up their little cares, and supply their little comforts, and make the house merry once more.'

'How nice!' said Tommy.

'Very nice,' said the Old Owl. 'But what'—and she shook herself more fiercely than ever, and glared so that Tommy expected nothing less than that her eyes would set fire to her feathers and she would be burnt alive. 'But what must I say of the boggarts? Those idle urchins who eat the bread and milk and don't do the work, who lie in bed without an ache or pain to excuse them, who untidy instead of tidying, cause work instead of doing it, and leave little cares to heap on big cares, till the old people who support them are worn out altogether.'

'Don't!' said Tommy. 'I can't bear it.'

'I hope when boggarts grow into men,' said the Old Owl, 'that their children will be boggarts too, and then they'll know what it is!'

'Don't!' roared Tommy. 'I won't be a boggart. I'll

be a brownie.'

'That's right,' nodded the Old Owl. 'I said you were a boy who could understand when one spoke. And remember that the brownies never are seen at their work. They get up before the household, and get away before anyone can see them. I can't tell you why. I don't think my grandmother's great-grandmother knew. Perhaps because all good deeds are better done in secret.'

'Please,' said Tommy, 'I should like to go home now,

and tell Johnnie. It's getting cold, and I am so tired!'
'Very well,' said the Old Owl, 'and then you will have to be up early to-morrow. I think I had better take you home.

'I know the way, thank you,' said Tommy.

'I didn't say show you the way, I said take you—carry you,' said the owl. 'Lean against me.'
'I'd rather not, thank you,' said Tommy.

'Lean against me,' screamed the owl. 'Oohoo! how obstinate boys are to be sure!'

Tommy crept up very unwillingly.

'Lean your full weight, and shut your eyes,' said the owl.

Tommy laid his head against the Old Owl's feathers, had a vague idea that she smelt of heather, and thought it must be from living on the moor, shut his eyes, and leant his full weight, expecting that he and the owl would certainly fall off the beam together. Down—feathers—fluff—he sank and sank, could feel nothing solid, jumped up with a start to save himself, opened his eyes, and found that he was sitting among the heather in the malt-loft, with Johnnie sleeping by his side.

'How quickly we came!' said he; 'that is certainly a very clever Old Owl. I couldn't have counted ten whilst my

eyes were shut. How very odd!'

But what was odder still was, that it was no longer moon-

light, but early dawn.

'Get up, Johnnie,' said his brother, 'I've got a story to tell you.'

And while Johnnie sat up and rubbed his eyes open, he

related his adventures on the moor.

'Is all that true?' said Johnnie. 'I mean, did it really happen?'

'Of course it did,' said his brother; 'don't you believe it?'
'Oh yes,' said Johnnie. 'But I thought it was perhaps
only a true story, like Granny's true stories. I believe all
those, you know. But if you were there, you know, it is different-

'I was there,' said Tommy, 'and it's all just as I tell you: and I tell you what, if we mean to do anything we must get up: though, oh dear! I should like to stay in bed. I say,' he added, after a pause, 'suppose we do. It can't matter being boggarts for one night more. I mean to be a brownie before I grow up, though. I couldn't stand boggarty children.'

'I won't be a boggart at all,' said Johnnie, 'it's horrid. But I don't see how we can be brownies, for I'm afraid we

can't do the things. I wish I were bigger!'

'I can do it well enough,' said Tommy, following his brother's example and getting up. 'Don't you suppose I can light a fire? Think of all the bonfires we have made! And I don't think I should mind having a regular good tidy-up either. It's that stupid putting-away-things-when-you've-done-with-them that I hate so!'

The brownies crept softly down the ladder and into the kitchen. There was the blank hearth, the dirty floor, and all the odds and ends lying about, looking cheerless enough in the dim light. Tommy felt quite important as he looked round. There is no such cure for untidiness as clearing up after other people; one sees so clearly where the fault lies.

'Look at that doorstep, Johnnie,' said the brownie-elect, 'what a mess you made of it! If you had lifted the moss carefully, instead of stamping and struggling with it, it would have saved us ten minutes' work this morning.'

This wisdom could not be gainsaid, and Johnnie only

looked meek and rueful

'I am going to light the fire,' pursued his brother—'the next turfs, you know, we must get—you can tidy a bit. Look at that knife I gave you to hold last night, and that wood—that's my fault though, and so are those scraps by Granny's chair. What are you grubbing at that rat-hole for?'

Johnnie raised his head somewhat flushed and tumbled. 'What do you think I have found?' said he triumphantly. 'Father's measure that has been lost for a week!'

'Hurrah!' said Tommy, 'put it by his things. That's just a sort of thing for a brownie to have done. What will he say? And I say, Johnnie, when you've tidied, just go and grub up a potato or two in the garden, and I'll put them to roast for breakfast. I'm lighting such a bonfire!'

The fire was very successful. Johnnie went after the potatoes, and Tommy cleaned the doorstep, swept the room, dusted the chairs and the old chest, and set out the table. There was no doubt he could be handy when he chose.

'I'll tell you what I've thought of, if we have time,' said Johnnie, as he washed the potatoes in the water that had been set for Brownie. 'We might run down to the South Pasture for some mushrooms. Father said the reason we found so few was that people go by sunrise for them to take to market. The sun's only just rising, we should be sure to find some, and they would do for breakfast.'

'There's plenty of time,' said Tommy; so they went. The dew lay heavy and thick upon the grass by the roadside, and over the miles of network that the spiders had woven from blossom to blossom of the heather. The dew is the sun's breakfast; but he was barely up yet, and had not eaten it, and the world felt anything but warm. Nevertheless, it was so sweet and fresh as it is at no later hour of the day, and every sound was like the returning voice of a long-absent

friend. Down to the pastures, where was more network and more dew, but when one has nothing to speak of in the way of boots, the state of the ground is of the less

consequence.

The tailor had been right, there was no lack of mush-rooms at this time of the morning. All over the pasture they stood, of all sizes, some like buttons, some like tables; and in the distance one or two ragged women, stooping over them with baskets, looked like huge fungi also.

'This is where the fairies feast,' said Tommy. 'They had a large party last night. When they go, they take away the dishes and cups, for they are made of gold; but they

leave their tables and we eat them.'

'I wonder whether giants would like to eat our tables,' said Johnnie.

This was beyond Tommy's capabilities of surmise; so they filled a handkerchief, and hurried back again for fear the tailor should have come downstairs.

They were depositing the last mushroom in a dish on the table when his footsteps were heard descending.
'There he is!' exclaimed Tommy. 'Remember, we

mustn't be caught. Run back to bed.'

Johnnie caught up the handkerchief, and smothering their laughter, the two scrambled back up the ladder, and dashed straight into the heather.

Meanwhile the poor tailor came wearily downstairs. Day after day, since his wife's death, he had come down every morning to the same desolate sight—yesterday's refuse and an empty hearth. This morning task of tidying was always a sad and ungrateful one to the widowed father. His awkward struggles with the housework in which she had been so notable, chafed him. The dirty kitchen was dreary, the labour lonely, and it was an hour's time lost to

his trade. But life does not stand still while one is wishing, and so the tailor did that for which there was neither remedy nor substitute; and came down this morning as other mornings to the pail and broom. When he came in he looked round, and started and rubbed his eyes; looked round again and rubbed them harder; then went up to the fire and held out his hand (warm certainly)—then up to the table and smelt the mushrooms (esculent fungi beyond a doubt)—handled the loaf, stared at the open door and window, the swept floor, and the sunshine pouring in, and finally sat down in stunned admiration. Then he jumped up and ran to the foot of the stairs, shouting:

'Mother! Mother! Trout's luck has come again.'
'And yet, no!' he thought, 'the old lady's asleep, it's a shame to wake her, I'll tell those idle rascally lads, they'll be more pleased than they deserve. It was Tommy after all that set the water and caught him. Boys! boys!' he shouted at the foot of the ladder, 'the brownie has come!—and if he hasn't found my measure!' he added on returning to the kitchen; 'this is as good as a day's work

to me.'

There was great excitement in the small household that day. The boys kept their own counsel. The old grandmother was triumphant and tried not to seem surprised. The tailor made no such vain effort, and remained till bedtime in a state of fresh and unconcealed amazement.

'I've often heard of the Good People,' he broke out towards the end of the evening. 'And I've heard folk say they've known those that have seen them capering round the grey rocks on the moor at midnight: but this is wonderful! To come and do the work for a pan of cold water! Who could have believed it?'

'You might have believed it if you'd believed me, son

Thomas,' said the old lady tossily. 'I told you so.

young people always know better than their elders!'

'I didn't see him,' said the tailor, beginning his story afresh; 'but I thought as I came in I heard a sort of laughing and rustling.'

'My mother said they often heard him playing and laughing about the house,' said the old lady. 'I told you so.' 'Well, he shan't want for a bowl of bread and milk to-

morrow, anyhow,' said the tailor, 'if I have to stick to Farmer Swede's waistcoat till midnight.'

But the waistcoat was finished by bedtime, and the tailor

set the bread and milk himself, and went to rest.

'I say,' said Tommy, when both the boys were in bed, 'the Old Owl was right, and we must stick to it. But I'll tell you what I don't like, and that is Father thinking we're idle still. I wish he knew we were the brownies.'

'So do I,' said Johnnie; and he sighed.

'I tell you what,' said Tommy, with the decisiveness of elder brotherhood, 'we'll keep quiet for a bit for fear we should leave off; but when we've gone on a good while I shall tell him. It was only the Old Owl's grandmother's great-grandmother who said it was to be kept secret, and the Old Owl herself said grandmothers were not always in the right.'

'No more they are,' said Johnnie; 'look at Granny about

this.'

'I know,' said Tommy. 'She's in a regular muddle.'

'So she is,' said Johnnie. 'But that's rather fun, I think.'

And they went to sleep.

Day after day went by, and still the brownies 'stuck to it,' and did their work. It is no such very hard matter after all to get up early when one is young and light-hearted, and sleeps upon heather in a loft without window-blinds, and with so many broken window-panes that the air comes freely in. In old times the boys used to play at tents among the heather, while the tailor did the housework; now they came down and did it for him.

Size is not everything, even in this material existence. One has heard of dwarfs who were quite as clever (not to say as powerful) as giants, and I do not fancy that fairy god-mothers are ever very large. It is wonderful what a comfort brownies may be in the house that is fortunate enough to hold them! The tailor's brownies were the joy of his life; and day after day they seemed to grow more and more ingenious in finding little things to do for his good.

Nowadays Granny never picked a scrap for herself. One day's shearings were all neatly arranged the next morning, and laid by her knitting-pins; and the tailor's tape and shears

were no more absent without leave.

One day a message came to him to offer him two or three days' tailoring in a farmhouse some miles up the valley. This was pleasant and advantageous sort of work; good food, sure pay, and a cheerful change; but he did not know how he could leave his family, unless, indeed, the brownie might be relied upon to 'keep the house together,' as they say. The boys were sure that he would, and they promised to set his water, and to give as little trouble as possible; so, finally, the tailor took up his shears and went up the valley, where the green banks sloped up into purple moor, or broke into sandy rocks, crowned with nodding oak fern. On to the prosperous old farm, where he spent a very pleasant time, sitting level with the window geraniums on a table set apart for him, stitching and gossiping, gossiping and stitching, and feeling secure of honest payment when his work was done. The mistress of the house was a kind, good creature, and loved a chat; and though the tailor kept his

own secret as to the brownies, he felt rather curious to know if the Good People had any hand in the comfort of this flourishing household, and watched his opportunity to make

a few careless inquiries on the subject.

'Brownies?' laughed the dame. 'Ay, master, I have heard of them. When I was a girl, in service at the old hall, on Cowberry Edge, I heard a good deal of one they said had lived there in former times. He did housework as well as a woman, and a good deal quicker, they said. One night one of the young ladies (that were then, they're all dead now) hid herself in a cupboard, to see what he was like.'

'And what was he like?' inquired the tailor, as com-

posedly as he was able.

'A little fellow, they said,' answered the farmer's wife, knitting calmly on. 'Like a dwarf, you know, with a largish head for his body. Not taller than—why, my Bill, or your eldest boy, perhaps. And he was dressed in rags, with an old cloak on, and stamping with passion at a cobweb he couldn't get at with his broom. They've very uncertain tempers, they say. Tears one minute and laughing the next.'

'You never had one here, I suppose?' said the tailor.

'Not we,' she answered; 'and I think I'd rather not. They're not canny after all; and my master and me have always been used to work, and we've sons and daughters to help us, and that's better than meddling with the fairies, to my mind. No! no!' she added, laughing, 'if we had had one you'd have heard of it, whoever didn't, for I should have had some decent clothes made for him. I couldn't stand rags and old cloaks, messing and moth-catching, in my house.'

'They say it's not lucky to give them clothes, though,' said the tailor; 'they don't like it.'

'Tell me!' said the dame, 'as if anyone that liked a tidy room wouldn't like tidy clothes, if they could get them. No! no! when we have one, you shall take his measure, I promise you.'

And this was all the tailor got out of her on the subject. When his work was finished the farmer paid him at once; and the good dame added half a cheese and a bottle-green

coat.

'That has been laid by for being too small for the master now he's so stout,' she said; 'but except for a stain or two it's good enough, and will cut up like new for one of the lads.'

The tailor thanked them, and said farewell, and went home. Down the valley, where the river, wandering between the green banks and the sandy rocks, was caught by giant mosses and bands of fairy fern, and there choked and struggled, and at last barely escaped with an existence, and ran away in a diminished stream. On up the purple hills to the old ruined house. As he came in at the gate he was struck by some idea of change, and looking again he saw that the garden had been weeded, and was comparatively tidy. The truth is, that Tommy and Johnnie had taken advantage of the tailor's absence to do some brownie's work in the daytime.

'It's that blessed brownie!' said the tailor. 'Has he been as usual?' he asked, when he was in the house.

'To be sure,' said the old lady; 'all has been well, son Thomas.'

'I'll tell you what it is,' said the tailor, after a pause. 'I'm a needy man, but I hope I'm not ungrateful. I can never repay the brownie for what he has done for me and mine; but the mistress up yonder has given me a bottle-green coat that will cut up as good as new; and as sure as there's a brownie in this house I'll make him a suit of it.'

'You'll what?' shrieked the old lady. 'Son Thomas, son Thomas, you're mad! Do what you please for the brownies, but never make them clothes.'

'There's nothing they want more,' said the tailor, 'by all accounts. They're all in rags, as well they may be,

doing so much work.'

'If you make clothes for this brownie he'll go for good,'

said the grandmother, in a voice of awful warning.

'Well, I don't know,' said her son. 'The mistress up at the farm is clever enough, I can tell you; and as she said to me, fancy anyone that likes a tidy room not liking a tidy coat!' For the tailor, like most men, was apt to think well of the wisdom of womankind in other houses.

'Well, well,' said the old lady, 'go your own way. I'm an old woman, and my time is not long. It doesn't matter much to me. But it was new clothes that drove the brownie

out before, and Trout's luck went with him.'

'I know, Mother,' said the tailor, 'and I've been thinking of it all the way home; and I can tell you why it was. Depend upon it, the clothes didn't fit. But I'll tell you what I mean to do. I shall measure them by Tommy—they say the brownies are about his size—and if ever I turned out a well-made coat and waistcoat, they shall be his.'

'Please yourself,' said the old lady, and she would say

no more.

'I think you're quite right, Father,' said Tommy, 'and

if I can, I'll help you to make them.'

Next day the father and son set to work, and Tommy contrived to make himself so useful that the tailor hardly knew how he got through so much work.

'It's not like the same thing,' he broke out at last, 'to have someone a bit helpful about you; both for the tailoring and for company's sake. I've not done such a pleasant



 $\textit{See page 38} \\ \textit{`what's this?' shouted the astonished tailor}$ 



morning's work since your poor mother died. I'll tell you what it is, Tommy,' he added; 'if you were always like this, I shouldn't much care whether Brownie stayed or went. I'd give up his help to have yours.'

'I'll be back directly,' said Tommy, who burst out of the

room in search of his brother.

'I've come away,' he said, squatting down, 'because I can't bear it. I very nearly let it all out, and I shall soon. I wish the things weren't going to come to me,' he added, kicking a stone in front of him. 'I wish he'd measured you, Johnnie.'

'I'm very glad he didn't,' said Johnnie. 'I wish he'd

kept them himself.'

'Bottle-green, with brass buttons,' murmured Tommy, and therewith fell into a reverie.

The next night the suit was finished, and laid by the bread and milk.

'We shall see,' said the old lady, in a withering tone. There is not much real prophetic wisdom in this truism, but it sounds very awful, and the tailor went to bed somewhat depressed.

Next morning the brownies came down as usual.

'Don't they look splendid?' said Tommy, feeling the cloth. 'When we've tidied the place I shall put them on.'

But long before the place was tidy, he could wait no longer, and dressed up.

'Look at me!' he shouted; 'bottle-green and brass

buttons! Oh, Johnnie, I wish you had some.'

'It's a good thing there are two brownies,' said Johnnie, laughing, 'and one of them in rags still. I shall do the work this morning.' And he went flourishing round with a broom, while Tommy jumped madly about in his new suit. 'Hurrah!' he shouted, 'I feel just like the brownie. What

was it Granny said he sang when he got his clothes? Oh, I know:

What have we here? Hemten hamten! Here will I never more tread nor stampen.'

And on he danced, regardless of the clouds of dust raised by Johnnie, as he drove the broom indiscriminately over the floor, to the tune of his own laughter.

It was laughter which roused the tailor that morning, laughter coming through the floor from the kitchen below.

He scrambled on his things and stole downstairs.

'It's the brownie,' he thought; 'I must look, if it's for the last time.'

At the door he paused and listened. The laughter was mixed with singing, and he heard the words:

'What have we here? Hemten hamten! Here will I never more tread nor stampen.'

He pushed in, and this was the sight that met his eyes.

The kitchen in its primeval condition of chaos, the untidy particulars of which were the less apparent, as everything was more or less obscured by the clouds of dust, where Johnnie reigned triumphant, like a witch with her broomstick; and, to crown all, Tommy capering and singing in the brownie's bottle-green suit, brass buttons and all.

'What's this?' shouted the astonished tailor, when he

could find breath to speak.

'It's the brownies,' sang the boys; and on they danced, for they had worked themselves up into a state of excitement from which it was not easy to settle down.

'Where is Brownie?' shouted the father.

'He's here,' said Tommy, 'we are the brownies.'

'Can't you stop that fooling?' cried the tailor, angrily. 'This is past a joke. Where is the real brownie, I say?'

'We are the only brownies, really, Father,' said Tommy, coming to a full stop, and feeling strongly tempted to run down from laughing to crying. 'Ask the Old Owl. It's true, really.'

The tailor saw the boy was in earnest, and passed his hand

over his forehead.

'I suppose I'm getting old,' he said; 'I can't see daylight through this. If you are the brownie, who has been tidying the kitchen lately?'

'We have,' said they.

'But who found my measure?'

'I did,' said Johnnie.

'And who sorts your grandmother's scraps?'

'We do,' said they.

'And who sets breakfast, and puts my things in order?'

'We do,' said they.

'But when do you do it?' asked the tailor.

'Before you come down,' said they.

'But I always have to call you,' said the tailor.

'We get back to bed again,' said the boys.

'But how was it you never did it before?' asked the tailor doubtfully.

'We were idle, we were idle,' said Tommy.

The tailor's voice rose to a pitch of desperation-

'But if you did the work,' he shouted, 'where is the brownie?'

'Here!' cried the boys, 'and we are very sorry that we were boggarts so long.'

With which the father and sons fell into each other's arms and fairly wept.

It will be believed that to explain all this to the grandmother was not the work of a moment. She understood it all at last, however, and the tailor could not restrain a little good-humoured triumph on the subject. Before he went to work he settled her down in the window with her knitting, and kissed her.

'What do you think of it all, Mother?' he inquired.

'Bairns are a blessing,' said the old lady tartly, 'I told you so.'

'That's not the end, is it?' asked one of the boys in a tone of dismay, for the doctor had paused here.

'Yes, it is,' said he.

'But couldn't you make a little more end?' asked Deordie, 'to tell us what became of them all?'

'I don't see what there is to tell,' said the doctor.

'Why, there's whether they ever saw the Old Owl again, and whether Tommy and Johnnie went on being brownies,' said the children.

'The doctor laughed.

'Well, be quiet for five minutes,' he said.

'We'll be as quiet as mice,' said the children.

And as quiet as mice they were. Very like mice, indeed. Very like mice behind a wainscot at night, when you have just thrown something to frighten them away. Death-like stillness for a few seconds, and then all the rustling and scuffling you please. So the children sat holding their breath for a moment or two, and then shuffling feet and smothered bursts of laughter testified to their impatience, and to the difficulty of understanding the process of story-making as displayed by the doctor, who sat pulling his beard, and staring at his boots, as he made up 'a little more end.'

'Well,' he said, sitting up suddenly, 'the brownies went on with their work in spite of the bottle-green suit, and

Trout's luck returned to the old house once more. Before long Tommy began to work for the farmers, and Baby grew up into a brownie, and made (as girls are apt to make) the best house-sprite of all. For, in the Brownies' habits of self-denial, thoughtfulness, consideration, and the art of little kindnesses, boys are, I am afraid, as a general rule, somewhat behindhand with their sisters. Whether this altogether proceeds from constitutional deficiency on these points in the masculine character, or is one result among many of the code of by-laws which obtains in men's moral education from the cradle, is a question on which everybody has their own opinion. For the present the young gentlemen may appropriate whichever theory they prefer, and we will go back to the story. The tailor lived to see his boybrownies become men, with all the cares of a prosperous farm on their hands, and his girl-brownie carry her fairy talents into another home. For these brownies-young ladies!—are much desired as wives, whereas a man might as well marry an old witch as a young boggartess.'

'And about the owl?' clamoured the children, rather

resentful of the doctor's pausing to take breath.

'Of course,' he continued, 'the tailor heard the whole story, and being both anxious to thank the Old Owl for her friendly offices, and also rather curious to see and hear her, he went with the boys one night at moonrise to the shed by the mere. It was earlier in the evening than when Tommy went, for before daylight had vanished, and at the first appearance of the moon, the impatient tailor was at the place. There they found the owl looking very solemn and stately on the beam. She was sitting among the shadows with her shoulders up, and she fixed her eyes so steadily on the tailor that he felt quite overpowered. He made her a civil bow, however, and said:

"I'm much obliged to you, ma'am, for your good advice

to my Tommy."

'The owl blinked sharply, as if she grudged shutting her eyes for an instant, and then stared on, but not a word spoke she.

"I don't mean to intrude, ma'am," said the tailor, "but I

was wishful to pay my respects and gratitude."

'Still the owl gazed in determined silence.

"Don't you remember me?" said Tommy pitifully. "I
did everything you told me. Won't you even say good-

bye?" and he went up towards her.

'The owl's eyes contracted, she shuddered a few tufts of fluff into the shed, shook her wings, and shouting "Oohoo!" at the top of her voice, flew out upon the moor. The tailor and his sons rushed out to watch her. They could see her clearly against the green twilight sky, flapping rapidly away with her round face to the pale moon. "Good-bye!" they shouted as she disappeared; first the departing owl, then a shadowy body with flapping sails, then two wings bearing the same measured time, then two moving lines still to the old tune, then a stroke, a fancy, and then—the green sky and the pale moon, but the Old Owl was gone.'
'Did she never come back?' asked Tiny in subdued

tones, for the doctor had paused again.

'No,' said he; 'at least not to the shed by the mere. Tommy saw many owls after this in the course of his life; but as none of them would speak, and as most of them were addicted to the unconventional customs of staring and winking, he could not distinguish his friend, if she were among them. And now I think that is all.'

'Is that the very very end?' asked Tiny.

'The very very end,' said the doctor.

'I suppose there might be more and more ends,'

speculated Deordie—'about whether the brownies had any children when they grew into farmers, and whether the children were brownies, and whether they had other brownies and so on and on.' And Deordie rocked himself among the geraniums, in the luxurious imagining of an endless fairytale.

'You insatiable rascal!' said the doctor. 'Not another word. Jump up, for I am going to see you home. I have to be off early to-morrow.'

'Where?' said Deordie.

'Never mind. I shall be away all day, and I want to be at home in good time in the evening, for I mean to attack that crop of groundsel between the sweet pea hedges. You know, no brownies come to my homestead!'

And the doctor's mouth twitched a little till he fixed it into a stiff smile.

The children tried hard to extract some more ends out of him on the way to the rectory; but he declined to pursue the history of the Trout family through indefinite generations. It was decided on all hands, however, that Tommy Trout was evidently one and the same with the Tommy Trout who pulled the cat out of the well, because 'it was just a sort of thing for a brownie to do, you know!' and that Johnnie Green (who, of course, was not Johnnie Trout) was some unworthy village acquaintance, and 'a thorough boggart.'

'Doctor!' said Tiny, as they stood by the garden-gate, 'how long do you think gentlemen's pocket-handkerchiefs

take to wear out?"

'That, my dear madam,' said the doctor, 'must depend, like other terrestrial matters, upon circumstances; whether the gentleman bought fine cambric, or coarse cotton with pink portraits of the reigning sovereign, to commence with;

whether he catches many colds, has his pockets picked, takes snuff, or allows his washerwoman to use washing powders.

But why do you want to know?'

'I shan't tell you that,' said Tiny, who was spoilt by the doctor, and consequently tyrannized in proportion; 'but I will tell you what I mean to do. I mean to tell Mother that when Father wants any more pocket-handkerchiefs hemmed she had better put them by the bath in the nursery, and perhaps some brownie will come and do them.'

'Kiss my fluffy face!' said the doctor in sepulchral tones. 'The owl is too high up,' said Tiny, tossing her head.

The doctor lifted her four feet or so, obtained his kiss,

and set her down again.

'You're not fluffy at all,' said she in a tone of the utmost contempt; 'you're tickly and bristly. Puss is more fluffy, and Father is scrubby and scratchy, because he shaves.'

'And which of the three styles do you prefer?' said the

doctor.

'Not tickly and bristly,' said Tiny with firmness; and she strutted up the walk for a space or two, and then turned round to laugh over her shoulder.

'Good night!' shouted her victim, shaking his fist after

her.

The other children took a noisy farewell, and they all raced into the house to give joint versions of the fairy-tale, first to the parents in the drawing-room, and then to Nurse in the nursery.

The doctor went home also, with his poodle at his heels, but not by the way he came. He went out of his way, which was odd; but then the doctor was 'a little odd,' and moreover this was always the end of his evening walk. Through the churchyard, where spreading cedars and stiff yews rose from the velvet grass, and where among tombstones and

crosses of various devices lay one of older and uglier date, by which he stayed. It was framed by a border of the most brilliant flowers, and it would seem as if the doctor must have been the gardener, for he picked off some dead ones, and put them absently in his pocket. Then he looked round as if to see that he was alone. Not a soul was to be seen, and the moonlight and shadow lay quietly side by side, as the dead do in their graves. The doctor stooped down and took off his hat.

'Good night, Marcia,' he said in a low, quiet voice. 'Good night, my darling!' The dog licked his hand, but there was no voice to answer, nor any that regarded.

Poor foolish doctor! Most foolish to speak to the departed with his face earthwards. But we are weak mortals, the best of us; and this man (one of the very best) raised his head at last, and went home like a lonely owl with his face to the moon and the sky.

## A BORROWED BROWNIE

'I can't imagine,' said the rector, walking into the drawing-room the following afternoon; 'I can't imagine where Tiny is. I want her to drive to the other end of the parish with me.'

'There she comes,' said his wife, looking out of the window, 'by the garden gate, with a great basket; what has she been after?'

The rector went out to discover, and met his daughter looking decidedly earthy, and seemingly much exhausted by the weight of a basketful of groundsel plants.

'Where have you been?' said he.

'In the doctor's garden,' said Tiny triumphantly; 'and look what I have done! I've weeded his sweet peas, and

brought away the groundsel; so when he gets home to-night he'll think a brownie has been in the garden, for Mrs

Pickles has promised not to tell him.'
'But look here!' said the rector, affecting a great appearance of severity, 'you're my brownie, not his. Supposing Tommy Trout had gone and weeded Farmer Swede's garden, and brought back his weeds to go to seed on the tailor's flower-beds, how do you think he would have liked it?'

Tiny looked rather crestfallen. When one has fairly carried through a splendid benevolence of this kind, it is trying to find oneself in the wrong. She crept up to the rector, however, and put her golden head upon his arm.

'But, Father dear,' she pleaded, 'I didn't mean not to

be your brownie; only, you know, you had got five left at home, and it was only for a short time, and the doctor hasn't any brownie at all. Don't you pity him?'

And the rector hugged his brownie in his arms, and

answered:

'My darling, I do pity him!'

## TIMOTHY'S SHOES<sup>1</sup>

## THE FAIRY GODMOTHER

TIMOTHY'S mother was very conscientious. When she was quite a young woman, just after the birth of her first baby, and long before Timothy saw the light, she was very much troubled about the responsibilities of having a family.

'Suppose,' she murmured, 'they catch measles, whooping cough, chicken-pox, scarlatina, croup, or inflammation of the lungs, when I might have prevented it: and either die, or have weak eyes, weak lungs, or a chronic sore throat to the end of their days. Suppose they have bandy legs from walking too soon, or crooked spines from being carried too long. Suppose, too, that they grow up bad—that they go wrong, do what one will to keep them right. Suppose I cannot afford to educate them properly, or that they won't learn if I can afford to have them taught. Suppose that they die young, when I might have kept them alive; or live only to make me think they had better have died young. Oh, dear, it's a terrible responsibility having a family!'

'It's too late to talk about that now, my dear,' said her godmother (a fairy godmother, too!); 'the baby is a very

I Some time after the appearance of 'Timothy's Shoes' in Aunt Judy's Magazine, I was told by a friend that a tale about a very similar pair of shoes had appeared in an American publication. My friend had forgotten the title, and I have not yet seen the story, but it is perhaps due to the writer of it to apologize for any unintentional similarity, and to myself to say that my little shoes were cobbled in my own brain, and not on a borrowed last.—J. H. E.

fine boy, and if you will let me know when the christening day is fixed, I will come and give him a present. I can't be godmother, though; I'm too old, and you've talked about responsibilities till I'm quite alarmed.' With which the old lady kissed her god-daughter, and nearly put out the baby's eye with the point of her peaked hat, after which she mounted her broom-stick and rode away.

'A very fine boy,' continued the young mother. 'Ah! that's just where it is; if it had only been a girl I shouldn't have felt so much afraid. Girls are easily managed. They have got consciences, and they mend their own clothes. You can make them work, and they can amuse themselves when they're not working. Now with boys it is quite different. And yet I shouldn't wonder if I have a large family of boys, just because I feel it to be such a responsibility.'

She was quite right. Years went by; one baby after another was added to the family, and they were all boys. 'Twenty feet that want socks,' sighed the good woman, 'and not a hand that can knit or darn!'

But we must go back to the first christening. The godmother arrived, dressed in plum-coloured satin, with a

small brown-paper parcel in her hand.

'Fortunatus's purse!' whispered one of the guests, nudging his neighbour with his elbow. 'The dear child will always be welcome in my poor establishment,' he added aloud to the mother.

'A mere trifle, my love,' said the fairy godmother, laying the brown-paper parcel beside her on the table and nodding

kindly to her god-daughter.

'That means a mug,' said one of the godfathers decidedly. 'Rather shabby! I've gone as far as a knife, fork, and spoon myself.'

'Doubtless, 'tis of the more precious metal,' said Dr Dixon Airey, the schoolmaster (and this was his way of saying that it was a gold mug), 'and not improbably studded with the glittering diamond. Let us not be precipitate in our conclusions.'

At this moment the fairy spoke again. 'My dear god-daughter,' she began, laying her hand upon the parcel, 'I have too often had reason to observe that the gift of beauty is far from invariably proving a benefit to its possessor.' ('I told you it was a purse,' muttered the guest.) 'Riches,' continued the fairy, 'are hardly a less doubtful boon; and the youth who is born to almost unlimited wealth is not always slow to become a bankrupt. Indeed, I fear that the experience of many centuries has almost convinced us poor fairies that extraordinary gifts are not necessarily blessings. This trifle,' she continued, beginning to untie the string of the parcel, 'is a very common gift to come from my hands, but I trust it will prove useful.'

'There!' cried the godfather, 'didn't I say it was a mug? Common? Why, there's nothing so universal except,

indeed, the knife, fork, and spoon.'

But before he had finished his sentence the parcel was opened, and the fairy presented the young mother with—a small pair of strong leather shoes, copper-tipped and heeled. 'They'll never wear out, my dear,' she said; 'rely upon it, you'll find them "a mother's blessing," and however large a family you may have, your children will step into one another's shoes just at the age when little feet are most destructive.' With which the old lady carefully wound the string on her finger into a neat twist, and folding the bit of brown paper, put both in her pocket, for she was a very economical dame.

I will not attempt to describe the scandalized buzz in

which the visitors expressed their astonishment at the meanness of the fairy's gift. As for the young mother, she was a sensible, sweet-tempered woman, and very fond of her old godmother, so she set it down to a freak of eccentricity; and,



'They'll never wear out, my dear,' she said

dismissing a few ambitious day-dreams from her mind, she took the shoes, and thanked the old lady pleasantly enough.

When the company had departed, the godmother still lingered, and kissed her god-daughter affectionately. 'If your children inherit your good sense and good temper, my love, they will need nothing an old woman like me can give them,' she said: 'but, all the same, my little gift is not quite so shabby as it looks. These shoes have another quality

besides that of not wearing out. The little feet that are in them cannot very easily go wrong. If, when your boy is old enough, you send him to school in these shoes, should he be disposed to play truant, they will pinch and discomfit him so that it is probable he will let his shoes take him the right way: they will in like manner bring him home at the proper time. And——'

'Mrs Godmother's broom-stick at the door!' shouted the farming man who was acting as footman on this occasion.

'Well, my dear,' said the old lady, 'you will find out their virtues all in good time, and they will do for the whole family in turn; for I really can come to no more christenings. I am getting old—besides, our day is over. Farewell, my love.' And mounting her broom-stick, the fairy finally departed.

#### KINGCUPS

As years went by, and her family increased, the mother learned the full value of the little shoes. Her nine boys wore them in turn, but they never wore them out. So long as the fairy shoes were on their feet they were pretty sure to go where they were sent and to come back when they were wanted, which, as all parents know, is no light matter. Moreover, during the time that each boy wore them, he got into such good habits that he was thenceforward comparatively tractable. At last they descended to the ninth and youngest boy, and became—Timothy's shoes.

Now the eighth boy had very small feet, so he had worn the shoes rather longer, and Timothy got them somewhat later than usual. Then, despite her conscientiousness, Timothy's mother was not above the weakness of spoiling the youngest of the family; and so, for one reason or another, Master Timothy was wilful, and his little feet pretty well used to taking their own way, before he stepped in the fairy shoes. But he played truant from the dame's school and was late for dinner so often, that at length his mother resolved to bear it no longer; and one morning the leather shoes were brightly blacked and the copper tips polished, and Master Tim was duly shod, and dismissed to school with many a wise warning from his fond parent.

'Now, Tim dear, I know you will be a good boy,' said

his mother, a strong conviction that he would be no such thing pricking her conscience. 'And mind you don't loiter or play truant, for if you do, these shoes will pinch you horribly, and you'll be sure to be found out.'

Tim's mother held him by his right arm, and Tim's left arm and both his legs were already as far away as he could stretch them, and Tim's face looked just as incredulous as yours would look if you were told that there was a bogy in the store-closet who would avenge any attack upon the jampots with untold terrors. At last the good woman let go her hold, and Tim went off like an arrow from a bow, and he gave not one more thought to what his mother had said.

The past winter had been very cold, the spring had been fitful and stormy, and May had suddenly burst upon the country with one broad bright smile of sunshine and flowers. If Tim had loitered on the school path when the frost nipped his nose and numbed his toes, or when the trees were bare and the ground muddy, and the March winds crept up his jacket-sleeves, one can imagine the temptations to delay when every nook had a flower and every bush a bird. It is very wrong to play truant, but still it was very tempting. Twirr-r-r-up into the blue sky went the larks; hedgebirds chirped and twitted in and out of the bushes, the pale milkmaids opened their petals, and down in the dark marsh below the kingcups shone like gold.

Once or twice Tim loitered to pick milkmaids and white starflowers and speedwell; but the shoes pinched him, and he ran on all the more willingly that a newly fledged butterfly went before him. But when the path ran on above the marsh, and he looked down and saw the kingcups, he dismissed all thoughts of school. True, the bank was long and steep, but that only added to the fun. Kingcups he must have. The other flowers he flung away. Milkmaids are wan-looking at the best; starflowers and speedwell are ragged; but those shining things that he had not seen for twelve long months, with cups of gold and leaves like waterlilies—Tim flung his satchel on to the grass, and began to scramble down the bank. But though he turned his feet towards the kingcups, the shoes seemed resolved to go to school; and as he persisted in going towards the marsh, he suffered such twitches and twinges that he thought his feet must have been wrenched off. But Tim was a very resolute little fellow, and though his ankles bid fair to be dislocated at every step, he dragged himself, shoes and all, down to the marsh. And now, provokingly enough, he could not find a kingcup within reach; in very perversity, as it seemed, not one would grow on the safe edge, but, like so many will-o'the-wisps, they shone out of the depths of the treacherous bog. And as Tim wandered round the marsh, jerk, wrench —oh, dear! every step was like a galvanic shock. At last, desperate with pain and disappointment, he fairly jumped into a brilliant clump that looked tolerably near, and was at once ankle-deep in water. Then, to his delight, the wet mud sucked the shoes off his feet, and he waded about among the rushes, reeds, and kingcups, sublimely happy.

And he was none the worse, though he ought to have been. He moved about very cautiously, feeling his way with a stick from tussock to tussock of reedy grass, and wondering how his eight brothers had been so feeble-minded as never to think of throwing the obnoxious shoes into a bog and so getting rid of them once for all. True, in fairy stories, the youngest brother always does accomplish what his elders had failed to do; but fairy-tales are not always true. At last Tim began to feel tired; he hurt his foot with a sharp stump. A fat yellow frog jumped up in his face and so startled him that he nearly fell backwards into the water. He was frightened, and had culled more kingcups than he could carry. So he scrambled out, and climbed the bank, and cleaned himself up as well as he could with a small cotton pocket handkerchief, and thought he would go on to school.

Now, with all his faults, Tim was no coward and no liar, so with a quaking heart and a stubborn face he made up his mind to tell the dame that he had played truant; but even when one has resolved to confess, the words lag behind, and Tim was still composing a speech in his mind, and had still got no farther than 'Please, ma'am,' when he found himself in the school and under the dame's very eye.

But Tim heeded not her frown, nor the subdued titters of the children: his eyes were fixed upon the schoolroom floor, where—in Tim's proper place in the class—stood the little leather shoes, very muddy, and with a kingcup in each.

'You've been in the marsh, Timothy,' said the dame. 'Put on your shoes.'

It will be believed that when his punishment and his lessons were over, Tim allowed his shoes to take him quietly home.

## THE SHOES AT SCHOOL

When Timothy's mother heard how he had been in the marsh, she decided to send him at once to a real boys' school, as he was quite beyond dame's management. So he was sent to live with Dr Dixon Airey, who kept a school on the moors, assisted by one usher, a gentleman who had very long legs and used very long words, and who wore common spectacles of very high power on workdays, and green ones on Sundays and holidays.

And Timothy's shoes went with him.

On the whole he liked being at school. He liked the boys, he did not hate Dr Airey much, and he would have felt kindly towards the usher but for certain exasperating circumstances. The usher was accustomed to illustrate his lessons by examples from familiar objects, and as he naturally had not much imagination left after years of grinding at the rudiments of everything with a succession of lazy little boys, he took the first familiar objects that came to hand, and his examples were apt to be tame. Now though Timothy's shoes were well known in his native village, they created quite a sensation in Dr Dixon Airey's establishment, and the usher brought them into his familiar examples till Timothy was nearly frantic. Thus: 'If Timothy's shoes cost 8s. 7d. without the copper tips, etc.'; or, illustrating the genitive case, 'Timothy's shoes, or the shoes of Timothy,' or again: 'The shoes. Of the shoes. To or for the shoes. The shoes. O shoes! By, with, or from the shoes.'

'I'll run away by, with, or from the shoes shortly,' groaned Timothy, 'see if I don't. I can't stand it any longer.'

'I wouldn't mind it, if I were you,' returned Bramble

minor. 'They all do it. Look at the fellow who wrote the Latin Grammar! He looks round the schoolroom, and the first thing that catches his eyes goes down for the first declension, *forma*, a form. They're all alike.'

But when the fruit season came round, and boys now and then smuggled cherries into school, which were forfeited by the usher, he sometimes used these for illustrations instead of the shoes, thus (in the arithmetic class): 'Two hundred and fifty-four cherries added to one thousand six

hundred and seventy-five will make-?'

'A very big pie!' cried Tim on one of these occasions. He had been sitting half asleep in the sunshine, his mind running on the coming enjoyments of the fruit season, cooked and uncooked; the usher had appealed to him unexpectedly, and the answer was out of his lips before he could recollect himself. Of course he was sent to the bottom of the class; and the worst of going down in class for Timothy was that his shoes were never content to rest there. They pinched his poor feet till he shuffled them off in despair, and then they pattered back to his proper place, where they stayed till, for very shame, Tim was obliged to work back to them: and if he kept down in class for two or three days, for so long he had to sit in his socks, for the shoes always took the place that Tim ought to have filled.

But, after all, it was pleasant enough at that school upon the moors, from the time when the cat-heather came out upon the hills to the last of the blackberries; and even in winter, when the northern snow lay deep, and the big dam was 'safe' for skaters, and there was a slide from the doctor's gate to the village post office—one steep descent of a quarter of a mile on the causeway, and as smooth as the glass mountain climbed by the princess in the fairy-tale. Then Saturday was a half-holiday, and the boys were allowed to ramble off on long country walks, and if they had been particularly good they were allowed to take out Nardy.

This was the doctor's big dog, a noble fellow of St Bernard breed. The doctor called him Bernardus, but the boys called him Nardy.

Sometimes, too, the usher would take one or two boys for a treat to the neighbouring town, and when the usher went out holidaying, he always wore the green spectacles, through which he never saw anything amiss, and indeed (it was whispered) saw very little at all.

Altogether Timothy would have been happy but for the shoes. They did him good service in many ways, it is true. When Timothy first came, the little boys groaned under the tyranny of a certain big bully of whom all were afraid. One day when he was maltreating Bramble minor in a shameful and most unjust fashion, Timothy rushed at him and with the copper tips of his unerring shoes he kicked him so severely that the big bully did not get over it for a week, and no one feared him any more. Then in races, and all games of swift and skilful chase, Timothy's shoes won him high renown. But they made him uncomfortable whenever he went wrong, and left him no peace till he went right, and he grumbled loudly against them.

'There is a right way and a wrong way in all sublunary affairs,' said the usher. 'Hereafter, young gentleman, you will appreciate your singular felicity in being incapable of taking the wrong course without feeling uncomfortable.'

'What's the use of his talking like that?' said Timothy, kicking the bench before him with his 'copper tips.' 'I don't want to go the wrong way, I only want to go my own way, that's all.' And night and day he beat his brains for a good plan to rid himself of the fairy shoes.

## THE SHOES AT CHURCH

On Sunday, Dr Dixon Airey's school went to the old church in the valley. It was a venerable building with a stone floor, and when Dr Dixon Airey's young gentlemen came in they made such a clattering with their feet that everybody looked round. So the usher very properly made a point of being punctual, that they might not disturb the congregation.

The usher always went to church with the boys, and he always wore his green spectacles. It has been hinted that on Sundays and holidays he was slow to see anything amiss. Indeed if he were directly told of misconduct he would only

shake his head and say:

'Humanum est errare, my dear boy, as Dr Kerchever Arnold truly remarks in one of the exercises.'

And the boys liked him all the better, and did not on the

whole behave any the worse for this occasional lenity.

Four times in the year, on certain Sunday afternoons, the young people of the neighbourhood were publicly catechized in the old church after the second lesson at Evening Prayer, and Dr Dixon Airey's young gentlemen with the rest. They all filed down the nave in a certain order, and every boy knew beforehand which question and answer would fall to his share. Now Timothy's mother had taught him the cathechism very thoroughly, and so on a certain Sunday he found that the lengthy answer to the question: 'What is thy duty towards thy neighbour?' had been given to him. He knew it quite well; but a stupid, half-shy, and wholly aggravating fit came upon him, and he resolved that he would not stand up with the others to say his catechism in church. So when they were about half-way there, Timothy slipped off unnoticed, and the usher—all con-

fidence and green spectacles—took the rest of the party on without him.

Oh, how the shoes pinched Tim's feet as he ran away over the heather, and how Tim vowed in his heart never to rest till he got rid of them! At last the wrenching became so intolerable that Tim tore them off his feet, and kicked them for very spite. Fortunately for Tim's shins the shoes did not kick back again, but they were just setting off after the usher, when Tim snatched them up and put them in his pocket. At last he found among the grey rocks that peeped out of the heather and bracken, one that he could just move, and when he had pushed it back, he popped the shoes under it, and then rolled the heavy boulder back on them to keep them fast. After which he ate bilberries till his teeth were blue, and tried to forget the shoes and to enjoy himself. But he could not do either.

As to the usher, when he found that Timothy was missing, he was very much vexed; and when the psalms were ended and still he had not come, the usher took off his green spectacles and put them into his pocket. And Bramble minor, who came next to Timothy, kept his prayer book open at the Church catechism and read his Duty to his Neighbour instead of attending to the service. At last the time came, and all the boys filed down the nave. First the parish schools and then Dr Dixon Airey's young gentlemen; and just as they took their places, between Bramble minor and the next boy—in the spot where Timothy should have been—stood Timothy's shoes.

After service the shoes walked home with the boys, and

followed the usher into Dr Dixon Airey's study.

'I regret, sir,' said the usher, 'I deeply regret to have to report to you that Timothy was absent from divine worship this evening.' 'And who did his Duty to his Neighbour?' asked the doctor anxiously.

'Bramble minor, sir.'

'And how did he do it?' asked the doctor.

'Perfectly, sir.'

'Mrs Airey and I,' said the doctor, 'shall have much pleasure in seeing Bramble minor at tea this evening. I believe there are greengage turnovers. We hope also for the honour of your company, sir,' added the doctor. 'And when Timothy retraces his erring steps, tell him to come and fetch his shoes.'

# THE POOR PERSON

I regret to say that the events just related only confirmed Timothy in his desire to get rid of his shoes. He took Bramble minor into his confidence, and they discussed the matter seriously after they went to bed.

What a gift it is to be able to dispose in one trenchant sentence of a question that has given infinite trouble to those principally concerned! Most journalists have this talent, and Bramble minor must have had some of it, for when Timothy had been stating his grievance in doleful and hopeless tones, his friend said:

'What's the use of putting them under stones and leaving them in bogs? Give your shoes to someone who wants 'em, my boy, and they'll be kept fast enough, you may be sure!'

'But where am I to find anyone who wants them?' asked Timothy.

'Why, bless your life!' said Bramble minor, 'go to the first poor person's cottage you come to, and offer them to the first person you see. Strong shoes with copper tips and heels will not be refused in a hurry, and will be taken very

good care of, you'll find.'

With which Bramble minor rolled over in his little bed and went to sleep, and Timothy turned over in his, and thought what a thing it was to have a practical genius—like Bramble minor! And the first half-holiday he borrowed a pair of shoes, and put his own in his pocket, and set forth for the nearest poor person's cottage.

He did not go towards the village (it was too public he thought): he went over the moors, and when he had walked about half a mile, down by a sandy lane just below him, he saw a poor person's cottage. The cottage was so tumbledown, and so old and inconvenient, there could be no doubt but that it belonged to a poor person, and to a very poor

person indeed!

When Timothy first rapped at the door he could hear no answer, but after knocking two or three times he accepted a faint sound from within as a welcome, and walked into the cottage. Though more comfortable within than without, it was unmistakably the abode of a 'poor person,' and the poor person himself was sitting crouched over a small fire, coughing after a manner that shook the frail walls of the cottage and his own frailer body. He was an old man, and rather deaf.

'Good afternoon,' said Timothy, for he did not know what else to say.

'Good day to ye,' coughed the old man.

'And how are you this afternoon?' asked Tim.

'No but badly, thank ye,' said the old man; 'but I'm a long age, and it's what I mun expect.'

'You don't feel as if a small pair of strong leather shoes

would be of any use to you?' asked Tim in his ear.

'Eh? Shoes? It's not many shoes I'm bound to wear

out now. These'll last my time, I expect. I'm a long

age, sir. But thank ye kindly all the same.'

Tim was silent, partly because the object of his visit had failed, partly with awe of the old man whose time was measured by the tattered slippers on his feet.

'You be one of Dr Airey's young gentlemen, I reckon,'

said the old man at last. Tim nodded.

'And how's the old gentleman? He wears well, do the doctor. And I expect he's a long age, too?'

'He's about sixty, I believe,' said Timothy.

'I thowt he'd been better nor seventy,' said the old man, in almost an injured tone, for he did not take much interest in anyone younger than threescore years and ten.

'Have you any children?' asked Tim, still thinking of

the shoes.

'Four buried and four living,' said the old man.

'Perhaps they might like a pair——' began Timothy; but the old man had gone on without heeding him.

'And all four on 'em married and settled, and me alone; for my old woman went Home twenty years back, come next fift' o' March.'

'I dare say you have grandchildren, then?' said Tim.

'Ay, ay. Tom's wife's brought him eleven, so fur; and six on 'em boys.'

'They're not very rich, I dare say,' said Tim.

'Rich!' cried the old man; 'why, bless ye, last year Tom were out o' work six month, and they were a'most clemmed.'

'I'm so sorry,' said Tim; 'and will you please give them these shoes? They're sure to fit one of the boys, and they are very very strong leather, and copper-tipped and heeled, and——'

But as Tim enumerated the merits of his shoes the old man tried to speak, and could not for a fit of coughing, and as he choked and struggled he put back the shoes with his hand. At last he found voice to gasp: 'Lor', bless you, Tom's in Osstraylee.'

'Whatever did he go there for?' cried Tim impatiently, for he saw no prospect of getting rid of his tormentors.

'He'd nowt to do at home, and he's doing well out yonder. He says he'll send me some money soon, but I doubt it won't be in time for my burying. I'm a long age,' muttered the old man.

Tim put the shoes in his pocket again, and pulled out a few coppers, the remains of his pocket-money. These the old man gratefully accepted, and Tim departed. And as he was late, he took off the borrowed shoes and put on his own once more, for they carried him quicker over the ground.

And so they were still Timothy's shoes.

## THE DIRTY BOY

One day the usher invited Timothy to walk to the town with him. It was a holiday. The usher wore his green spectacles; Tim had a few shillings of pocket-money, and plums were in season. Altogether the fun promised to

be good.

Timothy and the usher had so much moor breeze and heather scents every day, that they quite enjoyed the heavier air of the valley and the smell and smoke of town life. Just as they entered the first street a dirty little boy, in rags and with bare feet, ran beside them, and as he ran he talked. And it was all about his own trouble and poverty, and hunger and bare feet, and he spoke very fast, with a kind of whine.

'I feel quite ashamed, Timothy,' said the usher (who worked hard for twelve hours a day, and supported a blind

mother and two sisters)—'I feel quite ashamed to be out holidaying when a fellow creature is barefooted and in want.' And as he spoke the usher gave sixpence to the dirty little boy (who never worked at all, and was supported by kind people out walking). And when the dirty little boy had got the sixpence, he bit it with his teeth and rang it on the stones, and then danced Catherine-wheels on the pavement till somebody else came by. But the usher did not see this through his green spectacles.

And Timothy thought: 'My shoes would fit that bare-

footed boy.'

After they had enjoyed themselves very much for some time, the usher had to pay a business visit in the town, and he left Timothy to amuse himself alone for a while. And Timothy walked about, and at last he stopped in front of a bootmaker's shop, and in the window he saw a charming little pair of boots just his own size. And when he turned away from the window, he saw something coming very fast along the pavement like the three legs on an Isle of Man halfpenny, and when it stood still it was the barefooted boy.

Then Timothy went into the shop, and bought the boots,

and this took all his money to the last farthing.

And when he came out of the shop the dirty little boy was still there.

'Come here, my poor boy,' said Tim, speaking like a young gentleman out of Sandford and Merton. 'You look

very poor, and your feet must be very cold.'

The dirty boy whined afresh, and said his feet were so bad he could hardly walk. They were frost-bitten, sun-blistered, sore, and rheumatic; and he expected shortly to become a cripple like his parents and five brothers, all from going barefoot. And Timothy stooped down and took off the little old leather shoes.

'I will give you these shoes, boy,' said he, 'on one condition. You must promise not to lose them, nor to give them away.'

'Catch me!' cried the dirty boy, as he took the shoes. And his voice seemed quite changed, and he put one of his

dirty fingers by the side of his nose.

'I could easily catch you if I wished,' said Tim. (For slang was not allowed in Dr Dixon Airey's establishment, and he did not understand the remark.)

'Well, you are green!' said the dirty boy, putting on the

shoes.

'It's no business of yours what colour I am,' said Tim angrily. 'You're black, and that's your own fault for not washing yourself. And if you're saucy or ungrateful, I'll kick you—at least, I'll try,' he added, for he remembered that he no longer wore the fairy shoes, and could not be sure of kicking or catching anybody now.

'Walker!' cried the dirty boy. But he did not walk, he ran, down the street as fast as he could go, and Timothy

was parted from his shoes.

He gave a sigh, just one sigh, and then he put on the

new boots, and went to meet the usher.

The usher was at the door of a pastry-cook's shop, and he took Tim in, and they had veal pies and ginger wine; and the usher paid the bill. And all this time he beamed affably through his green spectacles, and never looked at

Timothy's feet.

Then they went out into the street, where there was an interesting smell of smoke, and humanity, and meat, and groceries, and drapery, and drugs, quite different to the moor air, and the rattling and bustling were most stimulating. And Tim and the usher looked in at all the shop windows gratis, and chose the things they would have

bought if they had had the money. At last the usher went into a shop and bought for Tim a kite which he had admired; and Tim would have given everything he possessed to have been able to buy some small keepsake for the usher, but he could not, for he had spent all his pocket-money on the new boots.

When they reached the bottom of the street, the usher said: 'Suppose we go up the other side and look at the shops there.' And when they were half-way up the other side, they found a small crowd round the window of a printseller, for a new picture was being exhibited in the window. And outside the crowd was the dirty boy, but Tim and the usher did not see him. And they squeezed in through the crowd and saw the picture. It was an historical subject with a lot of figures, and they were all dressed so like people on the stage of a theatre that Tim thought it was a scene out of Shakespeare. But the usher explained that it was the signing of the Magna Charta, or the Foundation Stone of our National Liberties, and he gave quite a nice little lecture about it, and the crowd said: 'Hear, hear!' But as everybody wanted to look at King John at the same moment when the usher called him 'treacherous brother and base tyrant,' there was a good deal of pushing, and Tim and he had to stand arm-in-arm to keep together at all. And thus it was that when the dirty boy from behind put his hand in the usher's waistcoat pocket, and took out the silver watch that had belonged to his late father, the usher thought it was Tim's arm that seemed to press his side, and Tim thought it was the usher's arm that he felt. But just as the dirty boy had secured the watch the shoes gave him such a terrible twinge, that he started in spite of himself. And in his start he jerked the usher's waistcoat, and in one moment the usher forgot what he was saying about our national

liberties, and recalled (as with a lightning flash) the connection between crowds and our national pickpockets. And when he clapped his hand to his waistcoat—his watch was gone!

'My watch has been stolen!' cried the usher, and, as he turned round, the dirty boy fled, and Tim, the usher, and the crowd ran after him crying: 'Stop thief!' and everyone they met turned round and ran with them, and at the top of the street they caught a policeman, and were nearly as glad as if they had caught the thief.

Now if the dirty boy had still been barefoot no one could ever have stopped him. But the wrenching and jerking of the shoes made running most difficult, and just as he was turning a corner they gave one violent twist that turned him right round, and he ran straight into the policeman's arms.

Then the policeman whipped out the watch as neatly as if he had been a pickpocket himself, and gave it back to the usher. And the dirty boy yelled, and bit the policeman's hand, and butted him in the chest with his head, and kicked his shins; but the policeman never lost his temper, and only held the dirty boy fast by the collar of his jacket, and shook him slightly. When the policeman shook him, the dirty boy shook himself violently, and went on shaking in the most ludicrous way, pretending that it was the policeman's doing, and he did it so cleverly that Tim could not help laughing. And then the dirty boy danced, and shook himself faster and faster, as a conjuror shakes his chain of iron rings. And as he shook, he shook the shoes off his feet, and drew his arms in, and ducked his head, and, as the policeman was telling the usher about a pickpocket he had caught the day before yesterday, the dirty boy gave one wriggle, dived, and leaving his jacket in the policeman's hand, fled away like the wind on his bare feet.

The policeman looked seriously annoyed; but the usher said he was very glad, as he shouldn't like to prosecute anybody, and had never been in a police-court in his life. And he gave the policeman a shilling for his trouble, and the policeman said the court 'wouldn't be no novelty to him'

-meaning to the dirty boy.

And when the crowd had dispersed, Timothy told the usher about the boots, and said he was very sorry; and the usher accepted his apologies, and said: 'Humanum est errare, my dear boy, as Dr Kerchever Arnold truly remarks in one of the exercises.' Then Timothy went to the bootmaker, who agreed to take back the boots 'for a consideration.' And with what was left of his money, Tim bought some things for himself and for Bramble minor and for the usher.

And the shoes took him very comfortably home.

# THE CHILDREN'S PARTY

When Timothy went home for the Christmas holidays, his mother thought him greatly improved. His friends thought so too, and when Tim had been at home about a week, a lady living in the same town invited him to a children's party and dance. It was not convenient for anyone to go with him; but his mother said: 'I think you are to be trusted now, Timothy, especially in the shoes. So you shall go, but on one condition. The moment ten o'clock strikes, you must start home at once. Now remember!'

'I can come home in proper time without those clodhopping shoes,' said Timothy to himself. 'It is really too bad to expect one to go to a party in leather shoes with copper tips and heels!'

And he privately borrowed a pair of pumps belonging to



 $$\it See\ page\ 54$$  'You've been in the marsh, timothy,' said the dame



his next brother, made of patent leather and adorned with neat little bows, and he put a bit of cotton wool into each toe to make them fit. And he went by a little by-lane at the back of the house, to avoid passing under his mother's window, for he was afraid she might see the pumps.

Now the little by-lane was very badly lighted, and there were some queer-looking people loitering about, and one of them shouted something at him, and Timothy felt frightened and walked on pretty fast. And then he heard footsteps behind him, and walked faster, and still the footsteps followed him, and at last he ran. Then they ran too, and he did not dare to look behind. And the footsteps followed him all down the by-lane and into the main street and up to the door of the lady's house, where Tim pulled the bell, and turned to face his pursuer.

But nothing was to be seen save Timothy's little old

leather shoes, which stood beside him on the steps.

'Your shoes, sir?' said the very polite footman who opened the door. And he carried the shoes inside, and Tim was obliged to put them on and leave the pumps with the footman, for (as he said) 'they'll be coming upstairs,

and making a fool of me in the ball-room.'

Tim had no reason to regret the exchange. Other people are not nearly so much interested in one's appearance as one is oneself; and then the shoes danced so beautifully that every little girl in the room wanted Tim for her partner, and he was perfectly at home, even in the Lancers. He went down twice to supper, and had lots of gooseberry-fool; and they were just about to dance Sir Roger de Coverley, when the clock struck ten.

Tim knew he ought to go, but a very nice little girl wanted to dance with him, and Sir Roger is the best of fun, and he thought he would just stay till it was over. But

though he secured his partner and began, the shoes made dancing more a pain than a pleasure to him. They pinched him, they twitched him, they baulked his glissades, and once when he should have gone down the room they fairly turned him round and carried him off towards the door. The other dances complained, and Tim kicked off the shoes in a

pet, and resolved to dance it out in his socks.

But when the shoes were gone, Tim found how much the credit of his dancing was due to them. He could not remember the figure. He swung the little lady round when he should have bowed, and bowed when he should have taken her hand, and led the long line of boys the wrong way, and never made a triumphal arch at all. The boys scolded and squabbled, the little ladies said he had had too much gooseberry-fool, and at last Timothy left them and went downstairs. Here he got the little pumps from the footman and started home. He ran to make up for lost time, and as he turned out of the first street he saw the leather shoes running before him, the copper tips shining in the lamp-light.

And when he reached his own door the little shoes were

waiting on the threshold.

#### THE SNOWSTORM

When Timothy went back to school in the beginning of the year the snow lay deep upon the moors. The boys made colossal snow men, and buried things deep under drifts, for the dog Bernardus to fetch out. On the ice Timothy's shoes were invaluable. He was the best skater and slider in the school, and when he was going triumphantly down a long slide with his arms folded and his friends cheering, Tim was very glad he had not given away his shoes.

One Saturday the usher took him and Bramble minor for a long walk over the hills. They had tea with a friendly farmer, whose hospitality would hardly let them go. So they were later than they had intended, and about the time that they set out to return a little snow began to fall. It was small snow, and fell very quietly. But though it fell so quietly, it was wonderful how soon the walls and gates got covered; and though the flakes were small they were so dense that in a short time no one could see more than a few yards in front of him. The usher thought it was desirable to get home as quickly as possible, and he proposed to take a short cut across the moors instead of following the high road all the way. So they climbed a wall, and ploughed their way through the untrodden snow, and their hands and feet grew bitterly painful and then numb, and the soft snow lodged in their necks and drifted on to their eyelashes and into their ears, and at last Timothy fairly cried. For he said that besides the biting of the frost his shoes pinched and pulled at his feet.

'It's because we are not on the high road,' said the usher; 'but this will take half an hour off our journey, and in five minutes we shall strike the road again, and then the shoes will be all right. Bear it for a few minutes if you can, Tim.'

But Tim found it so hard to bear, that the usher took him on to his back and took his feet into his hands, and Bramble minor carried the shoes. And five minutes passed, but they did not strike the road, and five more minutes passed, and though Tim lay heavy upon the usher's shoulder (for he was asleep) the usher's heart was heavier still. And five minutes more passed, and Bramble minor was crying, and the usher said: 'Boys, we've lost our way. I see nothing for it but to put Timothy's shoes down and follow them.'

So Bramble minor put down the shoes, and they started off to the left, and the usher and the boys followed them.

But the shoes tripped lightly over the top of the snow and went very fast, and the usher and Bramble minor waded slowly through it, and in a few seconds the shoes disappeared into the snowstorm and they lost sight of them altogether, and Bramble minor said: 'I can't go any further. I don't mind being left, but I must lie down, I am so very, very tired.'

Then the usher woke Timothy, and made him put on Bramble minor's boots and walk, and he took Bramble minor on to his back, and made Timothy take hold of his coat, and they struggled on through the storm, going as nearly as they could in the way that the shoes had gone.

'How are you getting on, Timothy?' asked the usher after a long silence. 'Don't be afraid of holding on to me,

my boy.'

But Timothy gave no answer.

'Keep a brave heart, laddie!' cried the usher, as cheerfully as his numb and languid lips could speak.

Still there was silence, and when he looked round,

Timothy was not there.

When and where he had lost his hold the distracted usher had no idea. He shouted in vain.

'How could I let him take off the shoes?' groaned the poor man. 'Oh! what shall I do? Shall I struggle on to save this boy's life, or risk all our lives by turning back after the other?'

He turned round as he spoke, and the wild blast and driving snow struck him in the face. The darkness fell rapidly, the drifts grew deeper, and yet the usher went after Timothy.

And he found him, but too late-for his own strength

was exhausted, and the snow was three feet deep all round him.

## BERNARDUS ON DUTY

When the snow first began to fall, Dr Dixon Airey observed: 'Our friends will get a sprinkling of sugar this evening'; and the boys laughed, for this was one of Dr Dixon Airey's winter jokes.

When it got dusk, and the storm thickened, Dr Dixon

Airey said: 'I hope they will come home soon.'

But when the darkness fell and they did not come, Dr Dixon Airey said: 'I think they must have remained at the farm.' And when an hour passed and nothing was to be seen or heard without but the driving wind and snow the doctor said: 'Of course they are at the farm. Very wise and proper.' And he drew the study curtains, and took up a newspaper, and rang for tea. But the doctor could not eat his tea, and he did not read his paper, and every five minutes he opened the front door and looked out, and all was dark and silent, only a few snowflakes close to him looked white as they fell through the light from the open door. And the doctor said: 'There can't be the slightest doubt they are at the farm.'

But when Dr Dixon Airey opened the door for the seventh time, Timothy's shoes ran in, and they were filled with snow. And when the doctor saw them he covered his face with his hands.

But in a moment more he had sent his manservant to the village for help, and Mrs Airey was filling his flask with brandy, and he was tying on his comforter and cap, and fastening his leggings and greatcoat. Then he took his lantern and went out in the yard.

And there lay Bernardus with his big nose at the door of

his kennel smelling the storm. And when he saw the light and heard footsteps, his great, melancholy, human eyes brightened, and he moaned with joy. And when the men came up from the village and moved about with shovels and lanterns, he was nearly frantic, for he thought: 'This looks like business'; and he dragged at his kennel, as much as to say: 'If you don't let me off the chain now, of all moments, I'll come on my own responsibility and bring the kennel with me.'

Then the doctor unfastened the chain, and he tied Timothy's shoes round the dog's neck, saying: 'Perhaps they will help to lead their wearer aright.' And either the shoes did pull in the right direction, or the sagacity of Bernardus sufficed him, for he started off without a moment's hesitation. The men followed him as fast as they were able, and from time to time Bernardus would look round to see if they were coming, and would wait for them. But if he saw the lanterns he was satisfied and went on.

'It's a rare good thing there's some dumb animals cleverer than we are ourselves,' observed one of the labourers as they struggled blindly through the snow, the lanterns casting feeble and erratic patches of light for a yard or two before their feet. To Bernardus his own wonderful gift was light, and sight, and guide, its own sufficient stimulus, and its own reward.

'There's some'at amiss,' said another man presently; 't'dog's whining; he's stuck fast.'

'Or perhaps he has found something,' said the doctor, trembling.

The doctor was right. He had found Timothy, and Bramble minor, and the usher; and they were still alive.

'Mrs Airey,' said the doctor, as, an hour later, they sat

round the study fire wrapped in blankets, and drinking tumblers of hot compounds. 'Mrs Airey, that is a creature above kennels. From this eventful evening I wish him to sleep under our roof.'



The men followed him as fast as they were able

And Mrs Airey began: 'Bless him!' and then burst into tears.

And Bernardus, who lay with his large eyes upon the fire, rejoiced in the depths of his doggish heart.

# THE SHOES GO HOME

It is hardly needful to say that Timothy was reconciled to his shoes. As to being ashamed of them—he would as soon have been ashamed of that other true friend of his, the usher. He would no more have parted with them now than Dr Dixon Airey would have parted with the dog Bernardus.

But, alas! how often it happens that we do not fully value our best friends till they are about to be taken from us! It was a painful fact, but Timothy was outgrowing his shoes.

He was at home when the day came on which the old leather shoes into which he could no longer squeeze his feet were polished for the last time, and put away in a cupboard in his mother's room: Timothy blacked them with his own hands, and the tears were in his eyes as he put them on the shelf.

'Good-bye, good little friends,' said he; 'I will try and walk as you have taught me.'

Timothy's mother was much affected by this event. She could not sleep that night for thinking of the shoes in the cupboard. She seemed to live over again all the long years of her married life. Her first anxieties, the good conduct of all her boys, the faithful help of those good friends to her nine sons in turn—all passed through her mind as she knitted her brows under the frill of her nightcap and gazed at the cupboard door with sleepless eyes. 'Ah!' she thought, 'how wise the good godmother was! No money, no good luck would have done for my boys what the early training of these shoes has done. That early discipline which makes the prompt performance of duty a habit in childhood, is indeed the quickest relief to parental anxieties, and the firmest foundation for the fortunes of one's children.'

Such, and many more, were the excellent reflections of this conscientious woman; but excellent as they were, they shall not be recorded here. One's own experience preaches with irresistible eloquence; but the second-hand sermons of other people's lives are apt to seem tedious and impertinent.

Her meditations kept her awake till dawn. The sun was just rising, and the good woman was just beginning to feel sleepy, and had once or twice lost sight of the bedroom furniture in a half-dream, when she was startled by the familiar sound as of a child jumping down from some height to the floor. The habit of years was strong on her, and she cried: 'Bless the boy! He'll break his neck!' as she had had reason to exclaim about one or other of her nine sons any day for the last twenty years.

But as she spoke the cupboard door swung slowly open, and Timothy's shoes came out and ran across the floor. They paused for an instant by his mother's bed, as if to say farewell, and then the bedroom door opened also and let them pass. Down the stairs they went, and they ran with that music of a childish patter that no foot in the house could make now; and the mother sobbed to hear it for the last time. Then she thought: 'The house door's locked, they can't go right away yet.'

But in that moment she heard the house door turn slowly on its hinges. Then she jumped out of bed, and ran to the

window, pushed it open, and leaned out.

In front of the house was a little garden, and the little garden was kept by a gate, and beyond the gate was a road, and beyond the road was a hill, and on the grass of the hill the dew lay thick and white, and morning mists rested on the top. The little shoes pattered through the garden, and the gate opened for them and snecked after them. And they crossed the road and went over the hill, leaving little

footprints in the dew. And they passed into the morning mists, and were lost to sight.

And when the sun looked over the hill and dried the dew, and sent away the mists, TIMOTHY'S SHOES were gone.

'If they never come back,' said Timothy's mother, 'I shall know that I am to have no more children!' and though she had certainly had her share, she sighed.

But they never did come back; and Timothy remained

the youngest of the family.



# JACKANAPES

If I might buffet for my love, or bound my horse for her favours, I could lay on like a butcher, and sit like a Jackanapes, never off!

King Henry V, Act v, Scene ii.

#### CHAPTER I

Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay,
The midnight brought the signal-sound of strife,
The morn the marshalling in arms—the day
Battle's magnificently stern array!
The thunder-clouds close o'er it, which when rent
The earth is cover'd thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heap'd and pent,
Rider and horse—friend, foe—in one red burial blent!

Their praise is hymn'd by loftier harps than mine; Yet one I would select from that proud throng,

——to thee, to thousands, of whom each And one as all a ghastly gap did make In his own kind and kindred, whom to teach Forgetfulness were mercy for their sake; The Archangel's trump, not Glory's, must awake Those whom they thirst for.

Byron.

TWO donkeys and the geese lived on the Green, and all other residents of any social standing lived in houses round it. The houses had no names. Everybody's address was 'The Green,' but the postman and the people of the

place knew where each family lived. As to the rest of the world, what has one to do with the rest of the world, when he is safe at home on his own Goose Green? Moreover, if a stranger did come on any lawful business, he might ask

his way at the shop.

Most of the inhabitants were long-lived, early deaths (like that of the little Miss Jessamine) being exceptional; and most of the old people were proud of their age, especially the sexton, who would be ninety-nine come Martinmas, and whose father remembered a man who had carried arrows, as a boy, for the Battle of Flodden Field. The Grey Goose and the big Miss Jessamine were the only elderly persons who kept their ages secret. Indeed, Miss Jessamine never mentioned anyone's age, or recalled the exact year in which anything had happened. She said that she had been taught that it was bad manners to do so 'in a mixed assembly.'

The Grey Goose also avoided dates, but this was partly because her brain, though intelligent, was not mathematical, and computation was beyond her. She never got farther than 'last Michaelmas,' 'the Michaelmas before that,' and 'the Michaelmas before the Michaelmas before that.' After this her head, which was small, became confused, and

she said: 'Ga, ga!' and changed the subject.

But she remembered the little Miss Jessamine, the Miss Jessamine with the 'conspicuous' hair. Her aunt, the big Miss Jessamine, said it was her only fault. The hair was clean, was abundant, was glossy, but do what you would with it it never looked quite like other people's. And at church, after Saturday night's wash, it shone like the best brass fender after a spring cleaning. In short, it was conspicuous, which does not become a young woman—especially in church.

Those were worrying times altogether, and the Green

was used for strange purposes. A political meeting was held on it with the village cobbler in the chair, and a speaker who came by stage-coach from the town, where they had wrecked the bakers' shops, and discussed the price of bread. He came a second time, by stage, but the people had heard something about him in the meanwhile and they did not keep him on the Green. They took him to the pond and tried to make him swim, which he could not do, and the whole affair was very disturbing to all quiet and peaceable fowls. After which another man came, and preached sermons on the Green, and a great many people went to hear him; for those were 'trying times,' and folk ran hither and thither for comfort. And then what did they do but drill the ploughboys on the Green, to get them ready to fight the French, and teach them the goose-step! However, that came to an end at last, for Bony was sent to St Helena, and the ploughboys were sent back to the plough.

Everybody lived in fear of Bony in those days, especially the naughty children, who were kept in order during the day by threats of 'Bony shall have you,' and who had night-mares about him in the dark. They thought he was an ogre in a cocked hat. The Grey Goose thought he was a fox, and that all the men of England were going out in red coats to hunt him. It was no use to argue the point, for she had a very small head, and when one idea got into it

there was no room for another.

Besides, the Grey Goose never saw Bony, nor did the children, which rather spoilt the terror of him, so that the Black Captain became more effective as a bogy with hardened offenders. The Grey Goose remembered his coming to the place perfectly. What he came for she did not pretend to know. It was all part and parcel of the war and bad times. He was called the Black Captain, partly because of himself,

and partly because of his wonderful black mare. Strange stories were afloat of how far and how fast that mare could go, when her master's hand was on her mane and he whispered in her ear. Indeed, some people thought we might reckon ourselves very lucky if we were not out of the fryingpan into the fire, and had not got a certain well-known Gentleman of the Road to protect us against the French. But that, of course, made him none the less useful to the Johnsons' nurse, when the little Miss Johnsons were naughty.

'You leave off crying this minnit, Miss Jane, or I'll give you right away to that horrid wicked officer. Jemima! just look out o' the windy, if you please, and see if the Black Cap'n's a-coming with his horse to carry away Miss Jane.'

And there, sure enough, the Black Captain strode by, with his sword clattering as if it did not know whose head to cut off first. But he did not call for Miss Jane that time. He went on to the Green, where he came so suddenly upon the eldest Master Johnson, sitting in a puddle on purpose, in his new nankeen skeleton suit, that the young gentleman thought judgment had overtaken him at last, and abandoned himself to the howlings of despair. His howls were redoubled when he was clutched from behind and swung over the Black Captain's shoulder, but in five minutes his tears were stanched, and he was playing with the officer's accoutrements. All of which the Grey Goose saw with her own eyes, and heard afterwards that that bad boy had been whining to go back to the Black Captain ever since, which showed how hardened he was, and that nobody but Bonaparte himself could be expected to do him any good.

But those were 'trying times.' It was bad enough when the pickle of a large and respectable family cried for the Black Captain; when it came to the little Miss Jessamine crying for him, one felt that the sooner the French landed and had done with it the better.

The big Miss Jessamine's objection to him was that he was a soldier, and this prejudice was shared by all the Green.



... the eldest Master Johnson, sitting in a puddle on purpose ...

'A soldier,' as the speaker from the town had observed, 'is a bloodthirsty, unsettled sort of a rascal, that the peaceable, home-loving, bread-winning citizen can never conscientiously look on as a brother, till he has beaten his sword into a ploughshare, and his spear into a pruning-hook.'

On the other hand there was some truth in what the

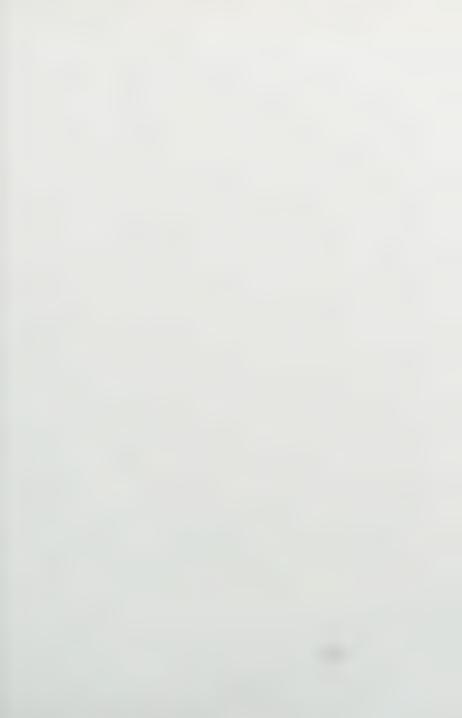
postman (an old soldier) said in reply; that the sword has to cut a way for us out of many a scrape into which our bread-winners get us when they drive their ploughshares into fallows that don't belong to them. Indeed, whilst our most peaceful citizens were prosperous chiefly by means of cotton, of sugar, and of the rise and fall of the money-market (not to speak of such salable matters as opium, fire-arms, and 'black ivory'), disturbances were apt to arise in India, Africa, and other outlandish parts, where the fathers of our domestic race were making fortunes for their families. And, for that matter, even on the Green, we did not wish the military to leave us in the lurch so long as there was any fear that the French were coming.¹

To let the Black Captain have little Miss Jessamine, however, was another matter. Her aunt would not hear of it; and then, to crown all, it appeared that the Captain's father did not think the young lady good enough for his son. Never was any affair more clearly brought to a conclusion.

But those were 'trying times'; and one moonlight night, when the Grey Goose was sound asleep upon one leg, the Green was rudely shaken under her by the thud of a horse's feet. 'Ga, ga!' said she, putting down the other leg and running away.

By the time she returned to her place not a thing was to be seen or heard. The horse had passed like a shot. But

<sup>&</sup>quot;The political men declare war, and generally for commercial interests; but when the nation is thus embroiled with its neighbours the soldier... draws the sword, at the command of his country.... One word as to thy comparison of military and commercial persons. What manner of men be they who have supplied the Caffres with the fire-arms and ammunition to maintain their savage and deplorable wars? Assuredly they are not military... Cease then, if thou would'st be counted among the just, to vilify soldiers.'—W. Napier, Lieut-General, November 1851.





See page 90 AT THE POND THE POSTMAN FOUND THEM BOTH

next day there was hurrying and scurrying and cackling at a very early hour, all about the white house with the black beams where Miss Jessamine lived. And when the sun was so low, and the shadows so long on the grass that the Grey Goose felt ready to run away at the sight of her own neck, little Miss Jane Johnson, and her 'particular friend' Clarinda, sat under the big oak-tree on the Green, and Jane pinched Clarinda's little finger till she found that she could keep a secret, and then she told her in confidence that she had heard from Nurse and Jemima that Miss Jessamine's niece had been a very naughty girl, and that that horrid wicked officer had come for her on his black horse, and carried her right away.

'Will she never come back?' asked Clarinda.

'Oh, no!' said Jane decidedly. 'Bony never brings

people back.'

'Not never no more?' sobbed Clarinda, for she was weak-minded, and could not bear to think that Bony never never let naughty people go home again.

Next day Jane had heard more.

'He has taken her to a Green.'

'A Goose Green?' asked Clarinda.

'No. A Gretna Green. Don't ask so many questions, child,' said Jane; who, having no more to tell, gave herself airs.

Jane was wrong on one point. Miss Jessamine's niece did come back, and she and her husband were forgiven. The Grey Goose remembered it well, it was Michaelmastide, the Michaelmas before the Michaelmas before the Michaelmas—but, ga, ga! What does the date matter? It was autumn, harvest-time, and everybody was so busy prophesying and praying about the crops that the young couple wandered through the lanes, and got blackberries for Miss

Jessamine's celebrated crab and blackberry jam, and made guys of themselves with bryony wreaths, and not a soul troubled his head about them, except the children, and the postman. The children dogged the Black Captain's footsteps (his bubble reputation as an ogre having burst), clamouring for a ride on the black mare. And the postman would go somewhat out of his postal way to catch the captain's dark eye, and show that he had not forgotten how to salute an officer.

But they were 'trying times.' One afternoon the black mare was stepping gently up and down the grass, with her head at her master's shoulder, and as many children crowded on to her silky back as if she had been an elephant in a menagerie; and the next afternoon she carried him away, sword and sabretache clattering war-music at her side, and the old postman waiting for them, rigid with salutation, at the four cross-roads.

War and bad times! It was a hard winter, and the big Miss Jessamine and the little Miss Jessamine (but she was Mrs Black-Captain now) lived very economically that they might help their poorer neighbours. They neither entertained nor went into company, but the young lady always went up the village as far as the George and Dragon for air and exercise, when the London Mail <sup>1</sup> came in.

One day (it was a day in the following June) it came in earlier than usual, and the young lady was not there to meet it.

<sup>1 &#</sup>x27;The mail coach it was that distributed over the face of the land, like the opening of apocalyptic vials, the heart-shaking news of Trafalgar, of Salamanca, of Vittoria, of Waterloo... The grandest chapter of our experience, within the whole mail coach service, was on those occasions when we went down from London with the news of victory. Five years of life it was worth paying down for the privilege of an outside place.'—DE QUINCEY.

But a crowd soon gathered round the George and Dragon, gaping to see the mail coach dressed with flowers and oakleaves, and the guard wearing a laurel wreath over and above his royal livery. The ribbons that decked the horses were stained and flecked with the warmth and foam of the pace at which they had come, for they had pressed on with the news of victory.

Miss Jessamine was sitting with her niece under the oaktree on the Green, when the postman put a newspaper

silently into her hand. Her niece turned quickly:

'Is there news?'

'Don't agitate yourself, my dear,' said her aunt. 'I will read it aloud, and then we can enjoy it together: a far more comfortable method, my love, than when you go up the village, and come home out of breath, having snatched half the news as you run.'

'I am all attention, dear Aunt,' said the little lady,

clasping her hands tightly on her lap.

Then Miss Jessamine read aloud—she was proud of her reading—and the old soldier stood at attention behind her, with such a blending of pride and pity on his face as it was strange to see:

'Downing Street, '22nd June 1815, I A.M.'

'That's one in the morning,' gasped the postman; 'beg

your pardon, mum.'

But though he apologized he could not refrain from echoing here and there a weighty word. 'Glorious victory'—'Two hundred pieces of artillery'—'Immense quantity of ammunition'—and so forth.

'The loss of the British Army upon this occasion has unfortunately been most severe. It had not been possible to make out a return of the killed and wounded when Major Percy left headquarters. The names of the officers killed and wounded, as far as they can be collected, are annexed.

'I have the honour——'

'The list, Aunt! Read the list!'

'My love-my darling-let us go in and-"

'No. Now! now!'

To one thing the supremely afflicted are entitled in their sorrow—to be obeyed—and yet it is the last kindness that people commonly will do them. But Miss Jessamine did. Steadying her voice as best she might she read on, and the old soldier stood bareheaded to hear that first roll of the dead at Waterloo, which began with the Duke of Brunswick, and ended with Ensign Brown.¹ Five-and-thirty British captains fell asleep that day on the Bed of Honour, and the Black Captain slept among them.

There are killed and wounded by war, of whom no returns

reach Downing Street.

Three days later, the captain's wife had joined him, and Miss Jessamine was kneeling by the cradle of their orphan son, a purple-red morsel of humanity, with conspicuously golden hair.

'Will he live, doctor?'

'Live? God bless my soul, ma'am! Look at him! The young Jackanapes!'

<sup>&#</sup>x27;Brunswick's fated chieftain' fell at Quatre Bras, the day before Waterloo, but this first (very imperfect) list, as it appeared in the newspapers of the day, did begin with his name, and end with that of an Ensign Brown.

### CHAPTER II

And he wandered away and away With Nature, the dear old Nurse.

Longfellow.

The Grey Goose remembered quite well the year that Jackanapes began to walk, for it was the year that the speckled hen for the first time in all her motherly life got out of patience when she was sitting. She had been rather proud of the eggs—they were unusually large—but she never quite felt comfortable on them; and whether it was because she used to get cramp, and go off the nest, or because the season was bad, or what, she never could tell, but every egg was addled but one, and the one that did hatch gave her more trouble than any chick she had ever reared.

It was a fine, downy, bright yellow little thing, but it had a monstrous big nose and feet, and such an ungainly walk as she knew no other instance of in her well-bred and high-stepping family. And as to behaviour, it was not that it was either quarrelsome or moping but simply unlike the rest. When the other chicks hopped and cheeped on the Green about their mother's feet, this solitary yellow brat went waddling off on its own responsibility, and do or cluck what the speckled hen would it went to play in the pond.

It was off one day as usual, and the hen was fussing and fuming after it, when the postman, going to deliver a letter at Miss Jessamine's door, was nearly knocked over by the good lady herself, who, bursting out of the house with her cap just off and her bonnet just not on, fell into his arms, crying:

'Baby! Baby! Jackanapes! Jackanapes!'

If the postman loved anything on earth, he loved the

captain's yellow-haired child, so propping Miss Jessamine against her own door-post, he followed the direction of her

trembling fingers and made for the Green.

Jackanapes had had the start of the postman by nearly ten minutes. The world—the round green world with an oak-tree on it—was just becoming very interesting to him. He had tried, vigorously but ineffectually, to mount a passing pig the last time he was taken out walking; but then he was encumbered with a nurse. Now he was his own master, and might, by courage and energy, become the master of that delightful, downy, dumpy, yellow thing that was bobbing along over the green grass in front of him. Forward! Charge! He aimed well, and grabbed it, but only to feel the delicious downiness and dumpiness slipping through his fingers as he fell upon his face. 'Quawk!' said the yellow thing, and wobbled off sideways. It was this oblique movement that enabled Jackanapes to come up with it, for it was bound for the pond, and therefore obliged to come back into line. He failed again from top-heaviness, and his prey escaped sideways as before, and, as before, lost ground in getting back to the direct road to the pond.

And at the pond the postman found them both, one yellow thing rocking safely on the ripples that lie beyond duckweed, and the other washing his draggled frock with tears, because he too had tried to sit upon the pond, and it

wouldn't hold him.

#### CHAPTER III

... If studious, copie fair what time hath blurred, Redeem truth from his jawes; if souldier, Chase brave employments with a naked sword Throughout the world. Fool not; for all may have, If they dare try, a glorious life, or grave.

In brief, acquit thee bravely: play the man. Look not on pleasures as they come, but go. Defer not the least vertue: life's poore span Make not an ell, by trifling in thy woe. If thou do ill, the joy fades, not the pains. If well: the pain doth fade, the joy remains.

GEORGE HERBERT.

Young Mrs Johnson, who was a mother of many, hardly knew which to pity more: Miss Jessamine for having her little ways and her antimacassars rumpled by a young Jackanapes; or the boy himself, for being brought up by an old maid.

Oddly enough, she would probably have pitied neither, had Jackanapes been a girl. (One is so apt to think that what works smoothest works to the highest ends, having no patience for the results of friction.) That Father in God, who bade the young men to be pure, and the maidens brave, greatly disturbed a member of his congregation, who thought that the great preacher had made a slip of the tongue.

'That the girls should have purity and the boys courage

is what you would say, good Father?'

'Nature has done that,' was the reply. 'I meant what I said.'

In good sooth, a young maid is all the better for learning some robuster virtues than maidenliness and not to move the antimacassars. And the robuster virtues require some fresh air and freedom. As, on the other hand, Jackanapes (who had a boy's full share of the little beast and the young monkey in his natural composition) was none the worse, at his tender years, for learning some maidenliness—so far as maidenliness means decency, pity, unselfishness, and pretty behaviour.



And it is due to him to say that he was an obedient boy, and a boy whose word could be depended on, long before his grandfather the general came to live at the Green.

He was obedient: that is he did what his great-aunt told him. But—oh dear! oh dear!—the pranks he played, which it had never entered into her head to forbid!

It was when he had just been put into skeletons (frocks never suited him) that he became very friendly with Master

Tony Johnson, a younger brother of the young gentleman who sat in the puddle on purpose. Tony was not enterprising, and Jackanapes led him by the nose. One summer evening they were out late, and Miss Jessamine was becoming



"... Tony Johnson's dying in the churchyard"

anxious, when Jackanapes presented himself with a ghastly face all besmirched with tears. He was unusually subdued. 'I'm afraid,' he sobbed. 'If you please, I'm very much afraid that Tony Johnson's dying in the churchyard.'

Miss Jessamine was just beginning to be distracted, when she smelt Jackanapes.

'You naughty, naughty boys! Do you mean to tell me

that you've been smoking?'

'Not pipes,' urged Jackanapes. 'Upon my honour, Aunty, not pipes. Only cigars like Mr Johnson's! And only made of brown paper with a very very little tobacco from the shop inside them.'

Whereupon Miss Jessamine sent a servant to the churchyard, who found Tony Johnson lying on a tombstone, very sick, and having ceased to entertain any hopes of his own

recovery.

If it could be possible that any 'unpleasantness' could arise between two such amiable neighbours as Miss Jessamine and Mrs Johnson—and if the still more incredible paradox can be that ladies may differ over a point on which they are agreed—that point was the admitted fact that Tony Johnson was 'delicate,' and the difference lay chiefly in this: Mrs Johnson said that Tony was delicate-meaning that he was more finely strung, more sensitive, a properer subject for pampering and petting than Jackanapes, and that, consequently, Jackanapes was to blame for leading Tony into scrapes which resulted in his being chilled, frightened, or (most frequently) sick. But when Miss Jessamine said that Tony Johnson was delicate, she meant that he was more puling, less manly, and less healthily brought up than Jackanapes, who, when they got into mischief together, was certainly not to blame because his friend could not get wet, sit a kicking donkey, ride in the giddy-go-round, bear the noise of a cracker, or smoke brown paper with impunity, as he could.

Not that there was ever the slightest quarrel between the ladies. It never even came near it, except the day after

Tony had been so very sick with riding Bucephalus in the giddy-go-round. Mrs Johnson had explained to Miss Jessamine that the reason Tony was so easily upset was the unusual sensitiveness (as a doctor had explained it to her) of the nervous centres in her family. 'Fiddlestick!' So Mrs Johnson understood Miss Jessamine to say, but it appeared that she only said 'Treaclestick!' which is quite another

thing, and of which Tony was undoubtedly fond.

It was at the fair that Tony was made ill by riding on Bucephalus. Once a year the Goose Green became the scene of a carnival. First of all, carts and caravans were rumbling up all along, day and night. Jackanapes could hear them as he lay in bed, and could hardly sleep for speculating what booths and whirligigs he should find fairly established, when he and his dog Spitfire went out after breakfast. As a matter of fact, he seldom had to wait so long for news of the fair. The postman knew the window out of which Jackanapes's yellow head would come, and was ready with his report.

'Royal Theayter, Master Jackanapes, in the old place, but be careful o' them seats, sir; they're rickettier than ever. Two sweets and a ginger-beer under the oak-tree, and the

flying-boats is just a-coming along the road.'

No doubt it was partly because he had already suffered severely in the flying-boats, that Tony collapsed so quickly in the giddy-go-round. He only mounted Bucephalus (who was spotted, and had no tail) because Jackanapes urged him, and held out the ingenious hope that the round-and-round feeling would very likely cure the up-and-down sensation. It did not, however, and Tony tumbled off during the first revolution.

Jackanapes was not absolutely free from qualms, but having once mounted the Black Prince he stuck to him as

a horseman should. During the first round he waved his hat, and observed with some concern that the Black Prince had lost an ear since last fair; at the second he looked a little pale, but sat upright, though somewhat unnecessarily rigid; at the third round he shut his eyes. During the fourth his hat fell off, and he clasped his horse's neck. By the fifth he had laid his yellow head against the Black Prince's mane, and so clung anyhow till the hobby-horses stopped, the proprietor assisted him to alight, and he sat down rather suddenly and said he had enjoyed it very much.

The Grey Goose always ran away at the first approach of the caravans, and never came back to the Green till there was nothing left of the fair but footmarks and oyster-shells. Running away was her pet principle: the only system, she maintained, by which you can live long and easily, and lose nothing. If you run away when you see danger you can come back when all is safe. Run quickly, return slowly, hold your head high, and gabble as loud as you can, and you'll preserve the respect of the Goose Green to a peaceful old age. Why should you struggle and get hurt, if you can lower your head and swerve, and not lose a feather. Why in the world should anyone spoil the pleasure of life, or risk his skin, if he can help it?

'What's the use?' Said the goose.

Before answering which one might have to consider what world—which life—and whether his skin were a goose-skin; but the Grey Goose's head would never have held all that.

Grass soon grows over footprints, and the village children took the oyster-shells to trim their gardens with; but the year after Tony rode Bucephalus there lingered another relic

of fair-time, in which Jackanapes was deeply interested. 'The Green' proper was originally only part of a straggling common, which in its turn merged into some wilder waste land where gipsies sometimes squatted if the authorities would allow them, especially after the annual fair. And it was after the fair that Jackanapes, out rambling by himself, was knocked over by the gipsy's son riding the gipsy's redhaired pony at breakneck pace across the common.

Jackanapes got up and shook himself, none the worse, except for being heels over head in love with the red-haired pony. What a rate he went at! How he spurned the ground with his nimble feet! How his red coat shone in the sunshine! And what bright eyes peeped out of his

dark forelock as it was blown by the wind!

The gipsy boy had had a fright, and he was willing enough to reward Jackanapes for not having been hurt by consenting to let him have a ride.

'Do you mean to kill the little fine gentleman, and swing us all on the gibbet, you rascal?' screamed the gipsymother, who came up just as Jackanapes and the pony set off.

'He would get on,' replied her son. 'It'll not kill him. He'll fall on his yellow head, and it's as tough as a coco-nut.'

But Jackanapes did not fall. He stuck to the red-haired pony as he had stuck to the hobby-horse; but oh, how different the delight of this wild gallop with flesh and blood! Just as his legs were beginning to feel as if he did not feel them, the gipsy boy cried 'Lollo!' Round went the pony so unceremoniously, that with as little ceremony Jackanapes clung to his neck, and he did not properly recover himself before Lollo stopped with a jerk at the place where they had started.

'Is his name Lollo?' asked Jackanapes, his hand lingering in the wiry mane.

'Yes.'

'What does Lollo mean?'

'Red.'

'Is Lollo your pony?'

'No. My father's.' And the gipsy boy led Lollo

away.

At the first opportunity Jackanapes stole away again to the common. This time he saw the gipsy-father, smoking a dirty pipe.

'Lollo is your pony, isn't he?' said Jackanapes.

'Yes.'

'He's a very nice one.'

'He's a racer.'

'You don't want to sell him, do you?'

'Fifteen pounds,' said the gipsy-father; and Jackanapes sighed and went home again. That very afternoon he and Tony rode the two donkeys, and Tony managed to get thrown, and even Jackanapes's donkey kicked. But it was jolting, clumsy work after the elastic swiftness and the dainty

mischief of the red-haired pony.

A few days later Miss Jessamine spoke very seriously to Jackanapes. She was a good deal agitated as she told him that his grandfather the general was coming to the Green, and that he must be on his very best behaviour during the visit. If it had been feasible to leave off calling him Jackanapes and to get used to his baptismal name of Theodore before the day after to-morrow (when the general was due), it would have been satisfactory. But Miss Jessamine feared it would be impossible in practice, and she had scruples about it on principle. It would not seem quite truthful, although she had always most fully intended that he should be called Theodore when he had outgrown the ridiculous appropriateness of his nickname. The fact was that he had

not outgrown it, but he must take care to remember who was meant when his grandfather said Theodore.

Indeed for that matter he must take care all along.

'You are apt to be giddy, Jackanapes,' said Miss Jessamine.

'Yes, Aunt,' said Jackanapes, thinking of the hobby-horses.

'You are a good boy, Jackanapes. Thank God, I can tell your grandfather that. An obedient boy, an honourable boy, and a kind-hearted boy. But you are—in short, you are a boy, Jackanapes. And I hope,' added Miss Jessamine, desperate with the results of experience, 'that

the general knows that boys will be boys.'

What mischief could be foreseen Jackanapes promised to guard against. He was to keep his clothes and his hands clean, to look over his catechism, not to put sticky things in his pockets, to keep that hair of his smooth ('It's the wind that blows it, Aunty,' said Jackanapes. 'I'll send by the coach for some bear's-grease,' said Miss Jessamine, tying a knot in her pocket handkerchief), not to burst in at the parlour door, not to talk at the top of his voice, not to crumple his Sunday frill, and to sit quite quiet during the sermon, to be sure to say 'sir' to the general, to be careful about rubbing his shoes on the door-mat, and to bring his lesson-books to his aunt at once that she might iron down the dogs'-ears. The general arrived, and for the first day all went well, except that Jackanapes's hair was as wild as usual, for the hairdresser had no bear's-grease left. He began to feel more at ease with his grandfather, and disposed to talk confidentially with him, as he did with the postman. All that the general felt it would take too long to tell, but the result was the same. He was disposed to talk confidentially with Jackanapes.

'Mons'ous pretty place this,' he said, looking out of the lattice on to the Green, where the grass was vivid with

sunset, and the shadows were long and peaceful.

'You should see it in fair-week, sir,' said Jackanapes, shaking his yellow mop, and leaning back in his one of the two Chippendale arm-chairs in which they sat.

'A fine time that, eh?' said the general, with a twinkle in

his left eye. (The other was glass.)

Jackanapes shook his hair once more. 'I enjoyed this last one the best of all,' he said. 'I'd so much money.'

'By George, it's not a common complaint in these bad

times. How much had ye?'

'I'd two shillings. A new shilling Aunty gave me, and elevenpence I had saved up, and a penny from the postman—sir!' added Jackanapes with a jerk, having forgotten it.

'And how did ye spend it—sir?' inquired the general.

Jackanapes spread his ten fingers on the arms of his chair, and shut his eyes that he might count the more con-

scientiously.

scientiously.

'Watch-stand for Aunty, threepence. Trumpet for myself, twopence, that's fivepence. Ginger-nuts for Tony, twopence, and a mug with a grenadier on for the postman, fourpence—that's elevenpence. Shooting-gallery a penny, that's a shilling. Giddy-go-round a penny, that's one and a penny. Treating Tony, one and twopence. Flying-boats (Tony paid for himself), a penny, one and threepence. Shooting-gallery again, one and fourpence. Fat Woman, a penny, one and fivepence. Giddy-go-round again, one and sixpence. Shooting-gallery, one and sevenpence. Treating Tony, and then he wouldn't shoot, so I did, one and eightpence. Living Skeleton, a penny—no, Tony treated me, the Living Skeleton doesn't count. Skittles, a penny, one and ninepence. Mermaid count. Skittles, a penny, one and ninepence. Mermaid

(but when we got inside she was dead), a penny, one and tenpence. Theatre, a penny ("Priscilla Partington, or the Green Lane Murder." A beautiful young lady, sir, with pink cheeks and a real pistol), that's one and elevenpence. Ginger-beer, a penny (I was so thirsty!), two shillings. And then the shooting-gallery man gave me a turn for nothing, because, he said, I was a real gentleman, and spent my money like a man.'

'So you do, sir, so you do!' cried the general. 'Why, sir, you spend it like a prince. And now I suppose you've

not got a penny in your pocket?"

'Yes, I have,' said Jackanapes. 'Two pennies. They are saving up.' And Jackanapes jingled them with his hand.

'You don't want money except at fair-times, I suppose?' said the general.

Jackanapes shook his mop.

'If I could have as much as I want, I should know what to buy,' said he.

'And how much do you want, if you could get it?'

'Wait a minute, sir, till I think what twopence from fifteen pounds leaves. Two from nothing you can't, but borrow twelve. Two from twelve, ten, and carry one. Please remember ten, sir, when I ask you. One from nothing you can't, borrow twenty. One from twenty, nineteen, and carry one. One from fifteen, fourteen. Fourteen pounds nineteen and—what did I tell you to remember?'

'Ten,' said the general.

'Fourteen pounds nineteen shillings and tenpence then, is what I want,' said Jackanapes.

'Bless my soul, what for?'

'To buy Lollo with. Lollo means red, sir. The gipsy's red-haired pony, sir. Oh, he is beautiful! You should

see his coat in the sunshine! You should see his mane! You should see his tail! Such little feet, sir, and they go like lightning! Such a dear face, too, and eyes like a mouse! But he's a racer, and the gipsy wants fifteen pounds for him.'

'If he's a racer, you couldn't ride him. Could you?'

'No-o, sir, but I can stick to him. I did the other day.'

'You did, did you? Well, I'm fond of riding, and if the beast is as good as you say, he might suit me.'

'You're too tall for Lollo, I think,' said Jackanapes,

measuring his grandfather with his eye.

'I can double up my legs, I suppose. We'll have a look at him to-morrow.'

'Don't you weigh a good deal?' asked Jackanapes.

'Chiefly waistcoats,' said the general, slapping the breast of his military frock-coat. 'We'll have the little racer on the Green the first thing in the morning. Glad you men-

tioned it, grandson. Glad you mentioned it.'

The general was as good as his word. Next morning the gipsy and Lollo, Miss Jessamine, Jackanapes, and his grandfather and his dog Spitfire were all gathered at one end of the Green in a group, which so aroused the innocent curiosity of Mrs Johnson, as she saw it from one of her upper windows, that she and the children took their early promenade rather earlier than usual. The general talked to the gipsy, and Jackanapes fondled Lollo's mane, and did not know whether he should be glad or miserable if his grandfather bought him.

'Jackanapes!'

'Yes, sir!'

'I've bought Lollo, but I believe you were right. He hardly stands high enough for me. If you can ride him to the other end of the Green, I'll give him to you.'

How Jackanapes tumbled on to Lollo's back he never knew. He had just gathered up the reins when the gipsy-father took him by the arm.

'If you want to make Lollo go fast, my little gentle-

'I can make him go!' said Jackanapes, and drawing from his pocket the trumpet he had bought in the fair, he blew a blast both loud and shrill.

Away went Lollo, and away went Jackanapes's hat. His golden hair flew out, an aureole from which his cheeks shone red and distended with trumpeting. Away went Spitfire, mad with the rapture of the race, and the wind in his silky ears. Away went the geese, the cocks, the hens, and the whole family of Johnson. Lucy clung to her mamma, Jane saved Emily by the gathers of her gown, and Tony saved himself by a somersault.

The Grey Goose was just returning when Jackanapes and

Lollo rode back, Spitfire panting behind.

'Good, my little gentleman, good!' said the gipsy. 'You were born to the saddle. You've the flat thigh, the strong knee, the wiry back, and the light caressing hand: all you want is to learn the whisper. Come here!'

'What was that dirty fellow talking about, grandson?'

asked the general.

'I can't tell you, sir. It's a secret.'

They were sitting in the window again, in the two Chippendale arm-chairs, the general devouring every line of his grandson's face, with strange spasms crossing his own.

'You must love your aunt very much, Jackanapes?'

'I do, sir,' said Jackanapes warmly.

'And whom do you love next best to your aunt?'

The ties of blood were pressing very strongly on the general himself, and perhaps he thought of Lollo. But



Away went Lollo . . .

love is not bought in a day, even with fourteen pounds nineteen shillings and tenpence. Jackanapes answered quite readily: 'The postman.'

'Why the postman?'

'He knew my father,' said Jackanapes, 'and he tells me about him, and about his black mare. My father was a soldier, a brave soldier. He died at Waterloo. When I grow up I want to be a soldier too.'

'So you shall, my boy. So you shall.'

'Thank you, Grandfather. Aunty doesn't want me to be a soldier for fear of being killed.'

'Bless my life! Would she have you get into a feather-bed and stay there? Why you might be killed by a thunderbolt if you were a butter-merchant!'

'So I might. I shall tell her so. What a funny fellow you are, sir! I say, do you think my father knew the gipsy's



secret? The postman says he used to whisper to his black mare.'

'Your father was taught to ride as a child, by one of those horsemen of the East who swoop and dart and wheel about a plain like swallows in autumn. Grandson! Love me a little too. I can tell you more about your father than the postman can.'

'I do love you,' said Jackanapes. 'Before you came I

was frightened. I'd no notion you were so nice.'

'Love me always, boy, whatever I do or leave undone. And—God help me—whatever you do or leave undone, I'll love you! There shall never be a cloud between us for a day; no, sir, not for an hour. We're imperfect enough, all of us, we needn't be so bitter; and life is uncertain enough at its safest, we needn't waste its opportunities. Look at me! Here sit I, after a dozen battles and some of the worst climates in the world, and by yonder lich-gate lies your mother, who didn't move five miles, I suppose, from your aunt's apron-strings—dead in her teens: my goldenhaired daughter, whom I never saw.'

Jackanapes was terribly troubled.

'Don't cry, Grandfather,' he pleaded, his own blue eyes round with tears. 'I will love you very much, and I will try to be very good. But I should like to be a soldier.'

'You shall, my boy, you shall. You've more claims for a commission than you know of. Cavalry, I suppose; eh, ye young Jackanapes? Well, well: if you live to be an honour to your country, this old heart shall grow young again with pride for you; and if you die in the service of your country—God bless me, it can but break for ye!'

And beating the region which he said was all waistcoats, as if they stifled him, the old man got up and strode out on

to the Green.

# CHAPTER IV

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.—John xv. 13.

TWENTY and odd years later the Grey Goose was still alive, and in full possession of her faculties, such as they were. She lived slowly and carefully, and she lived long. So did Miss Jessamine; but the general was dead.

He had lived on the Green for many years, during which he and the postman saluted each other with a punctiliousness that it almost drilled one to witness. He would have completely spoiled Jackanapes if Miss Jessamine's conscience would have let him; otherwise he somewhat dragooned his



... he and the postman saluted each other ...

neighbours, and was as positive about parish matters as a ratepayer about the army. A stormy-tempered, tender-hearted soldier, irritable with the suffering of wounds of which he never spoke, whom all the village followed to his grave with tears.

The general's death was a great shock to Miss Jessamine, and her nephew stayed with her for some little time after the funeral. Then he was obliged to join his regiment, which was ordered abroad.

One effect of the conquest which the general had gained over the affections of the village was a considerable abatement of the popular prejudice against 'the military.' Indeed the village was now somewhat importantly represented in the army. There was the general himself, and the postman, and the Black Captain's tablet in the church, and

Jackanapes, and Tony Johnson, and a trumpeter.

Tony Johnson had no more natural taste for fighting than for riding, but he was as devoted as ever to Jackanapes, and that was how it came about that Mr Johnson bought him a commission in the same cavalry regiment that the general's grandson (whose commission had been given him by the Iron Duke) was in, and that he was quite content to be the butt of the mess where Jackanapes was the hero; and that when Jackanapes wrote home to Miss Jessamine, Tony wrote with the same purpose to his mother: namely, to demand her congratulations that they were on active service at last, and were ordered to the front. And he added a postscript to the effect that she could have no idea how popular Jackanapes was, nor how splendidly he rode the wonderful red charger whom he had named after his old friend Lollo.

# 'Sound retire!'

A boy trumpeter, grave with the weight of responsibilities and accourrements beyond his years, and stained, so that his own mother would not have known him, with the sweat and dust of battle, did as he was bid; and then pushing his trumpet pettishly aside, adjusted his weary legs for the hundredth time to the horse, which was a world too big for him, and muttering: ''Tain't a pretty tune' tried to see something of this his first engagement, before it came to an end.

Being literally in the thick of it, he could hardly have seen less or known less of what happened in that particular skirmish if he had been at home in England. For many good reasons: including dust and smoke, and that what attention he dared distract from his commanding officer was pretty well absorbed by keeping his hard-mouthed troophorse in hand, under pain of execration by his neighbours in the mêlée. By and by, when the newspapers came out, if he could get a look at one before it was thumbed to bits, he would learn that the enemy had appeared from ambush in overwhelming numbers and that orders had been given to fall back, which was done slowly and in good order, the men

fighting as they retired. Born and bred on the Goose Green, the voungest of Mr Johnson's gardener's numerous offspring, the boy had given his family 'no peace' till they let him 'go for a soldier' with Master Tony and Master Jackanapes. They consented at last, with more tears than they shed when an elder son was sent to jail for poaching, and the boy was perfectly happy in his life, and full of esprit de corps. It was this which had been wounded by having to sound retreat for 'the young gentlemen's regiment,' the first time he served with it before the enemy, and he was also harassed by having completely lost sight of Master Tony. There had been some hard fighting before the backward movement began, and he had caught sight of him once, but not since. On the other hand, all the pulses of his village pride had been stirred by one or two visions of Master Jackanapes whirling about on his wonderful horse. He had been easy to distinguish, since an eccentric blow had bared his head without hurting it, for his close golden mop of hair gleamed in the hot sunshine as brightly as the steel of the sword flashing round it.

Of the missiles that fell pretty thickly, the boy trumpeter

did not take much notice. First, one can't attend to everything, and his hands were full. Secondly, one gets used to anything. Thirdly, experience soon teaches one, in spite of proverbs, how very few bullets find their billet. Far more unnerving is the mere suspicion of fear or even of anxiety in the human mass around you. The boy was beginning to wonder if there were any dark reason for the increasing pressure, and whether they would be allowed to move back more quickly, when the smoke in front lifted for a moment, and he could see the plain, and the enemy's line some two hundred yards away.

And across the plain between them, he saw Master Jackanapes galloping alone at the top of Lollo's speed, their

faces to the enemy, his golden head at Lollo's ear.

But at this moment noise and smoke seemed to burst out on every side, the officer shouted to him to sound retire, and between trumpeting and bumping about on his horse, he saw and heard no more of the incidents of his first battle.

Tony Johnson was always unlucky with horses, from the days of the giddy-go-round onwards. On this day—of all days in the year—his own horse was on the sick list, and he had to ride an inferior, ill-conditioned beast, and fell off that, at the very moment when it was a matter of life or death to be able to ride away. The horse fell on him, but struggled up again, and Tony managed to keep hold of it. It was in trying to remount that he discovered by helplessness and anguish that one of his legs was crushed and broken, and that no feat of which he was master would get him into the saddle. Not able even to stand alone, awkwardly, agonizingly unable to mount his restive horse, his life was yet so strong within him! And on one side of him rolled the dust and smoke-cloud of his advancing foes, and on the other, that which covered his retreating friends.

He turned one piteous gaze after them, with a bitter twinge, not of reproach, but of loneliness; and then, dragging himself up by the side of his horse, he turned the other way and drew out his pistol, and waited for the end. Whether he waited seconds or minutes he never knew, before someone gripped him by the arm.

'Jackanapes! God bless you! It's my left leg. If you

could get me on . . .'



'Hold on anyhow, and stick your spur in'

It was like Tony's luck that his pistol went off at his horse's tail, and made it plunge; but Jackanapes threw him across the saddle.

'Hold on anyhow, and stick your spur in. I'll lead him. Keep your head down, they're firing high.'

And Jackanapes laid his head down—to Lollo's ear.

It was when they were fairly off that a sudden upspringing of the enemy in all directions had made it necessary to change the gradual retirement of our force into as rapid a retreat as possible. And when Jackanapes became aware of this, and felt the lagging and swerving of Tony's horse, he began to wish he had thrown his friend across his own

saddle, and left their lives to Lollo.

When Tony became aware of it, several things came into his head. 1. That the dangers of their ride for life were now more than doubled. 2. That if Jackanapes and Lollo were not burdened with him they would undoubtedly escape. 3. That Jackanapes's life was infinitely valuable, and his—Tony's—was not. 4. That this—if he could seize it—was the supremest of all the moments in which he had tried to assume the virtues which Jackanapes had by nature; and that if he could be courageous and unselfish now—

He caught at his own reins and spoke very loud:

'Jackanapes! It won't do. You and Lollo must go on. Tell the fellows I gave you back to them, with all my heart.

Jackanapes, if you love me, leave me!'

There was a daffodil light over the evening sky in front of them, and it shone strangely on Jackanapes's hair and face. He turned with an odd look in his eyes that a vainer man than Tony Johnson might have taken for brotherly pride. Then he shook his mop, and laughed at him.

'Leave you? To save my skin? No, Tony, not to save

my soul!'

### CHAPTER V

MR VALIANT summoned. His will. His last words.

Then said he: 'I am going to my Father's.... My Sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my Pilgrimage, and my Courage and Skill to him that can get it.'... And as he went down deeper, he said: 'Grave, where is thy Victory?'

So he passed over, and all the Trumpets sounded for him on the

other side.—Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.

Coming out of a hospital tent, at headquarters, the surgeon cannoned against, and rebounded from, another officer:

a sallow man, not young, with a face worn more by ungentle experiences than by age; with weary eyes, that kept their own counsel, iron-grey hair, and a moustache that was as if a raven had laid its wing across his lips and sealed them.

'Well?'

'Beg pardon, major. Didn't see you. Oh, compound fractures and bruises, but it's all right. He'll pull through.'
'Thank God.'

It was probably an involuntary expression, for prayer and praise were not much in the major's line, as a jerk of the surgeon's head would have betrayed to an observer. He was a bright little man, with his feelings showing all over him, but with gallantry and contempt of death enough for both sides of his profession; who took a cool head, a white handkerchief, and a case of instruments where other men went hot-blooded with weapons, and who was the biggest gossip, male or female, of the regiment. Not even the major's taciturnity daunted him.

'Didn't think he'd as much pluck about him as he has. He'll do all right if he doesn't fret himself into a fever about

poor Jackanapes.'

'Whom are you talking about?' asked the major hoarsely.

'Young Johnson. He—'
'What about Jackanapes?'

'Don't you know? Sad business. Rode back for Johnson and brought him in; but, monstrous ill luck, hit

as they rode. Left lung-"

'Will he recover?'

'No. Sad business. What a frame—what limbs—what health—and what good looks! Finest young fellow——'

'Where is he?'

'In his own tent,' said the surgeon sadly.

The major wheeled and left him.

'Can I do anything else for you?'

'Nothing, thank you. Except—major! I wish I could get you to appreciate Johnson.'

'This is not an easy moment, Jackanapes.'

'Let me tell you, sir—he never will—that if he could have driven me from him, he would be lying yonder at this moment, and I should be safe and sound.'

The major laid his hand over his mouth, as if to keep back

a wish he would have been ashamed to utter.

'I've known old Tony from a child. He's a fool on impulse, a good man and a gentleman on principle. And he acts on principle, which it's not every—some water, please! Thank you, sir. It's very hot, and yet one's feet get uncommonly cold. Oh, thank you, thank you. He's no fire-eater, but he has a trained conscience and a tender heart, and he'll do his duty when a braver and more selfish man might fail you. But he wants encouragement; and when I'm gone—"

'He shall have encouragement. You have my word for

it. Can I do nothing else?'

'Yes, major. A favour.'
'Thank you, Jackanapes.'

'Be Lollo's master, and love him as well as you can. He's used to it.'

'Wouldn't you rather Johnson had him?'

The blue eyes twinkled in spite of mortal pain.

'Tony rides on principle, major. His legs are bolsters, and will be to the end of the chapter. I couldn't insult dear Lollo, but if you don't care—'

'Whilst I live—which will be longer than I desire or deserve—Lollo shall want nothing but . . . you. I have

too little tenderness for—my dear boy, you're faint. Can you spare me for a moment?'

'No, stay—major!'
'What? What?'

'My head drifts so-if you wouldn't mind.'

'Yes! Yes!'

'Say a prayer by me. Out loud, please, I am getting deaf.'

'My dearest Jackanapes—my dear boy——"

'One of the Church prayers—Parade Service, you know——'

'I see. But the fact is—God forgive me, Jackanapes—I'm a very different sort of fellow to some of you youngsters. Look here, let me fetch——'

But Jackanapes's hand was in his, and it wouldn't let go.

There was a brief and bitter silence.

"Pon my soul I can only remember the little one at the end."

'Please,' whispered Jackanapes.

Pressed by the conviction that what little he could do it was his duty to do, the major—kneeling—bared his head and spoke loudly, clearly, and very reverently:

'The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ---'

Jackanapes moved his left hand to his right one, which still held the major's.

'-the love of God.'

And with that—Jackanapes died.

#### CHAPTER VI

Und so ist der blaue Himmel grösser als jedes Gewölk darin, und dauerhafter dazu.—Jean Paul Richter.

Jackanapes's death was sad news for the Goose Green, a sorrow just qualified by honourable pride in his gallantry and devotion. Only the cobbler dissented, but that was his way. He said he saw nothing in it but foolhardiness and vainglory. They might both have been killed, as easy as not, and then where would ye have been? A man's life was a man's life, and one life was as good as another. No one would catch him throwing his away. And, for that matter, Mrs Johnson could spare a child a great deal better than Miss Jessamine.

But the parson preached Jackanapes's funeral sermon on the text: 'Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it'; and all the village went and wept to hear him.

Nor did Miss Jessamine see her loss from the cobbler's point of view. On the contrary, Mrs Johnson said she never to her dying day should forget how, when she went to condole with her, the old lady came forward, with gentle-womanly self-control, and kissed her, and thanked God that her dear nephew's effort had been blessed with success, and that this sad war had made no gap in her friend's large and happy home circle.

'But she's a noble, unselfish woman,' sobbed Mrs Johnson, 'and she taught Jackanapes to be the same, and that's how it is that my Tony has been spared to me. And it must be sheer goodness in Miss Jessamine—what can she know of a mother's feelings? And I'm sure most people

seem to think that if you've a large family you don't know one from another any more than they do, and that a lot of children are like a lot of store-apples, if one's taken it won't be missed.'

Lollo—the first Lollo, the gipsy's Lollo—very aged, draws Miss Jessamine's bath-chair slowly up and down the Goose Green in the sunshine.

The ex-postman walks beside him, which Lollo tolerates to the level of his shoulder. If the postman advances any nearer to his head, Lollo quickens his pace, and were the postman to persist in the injudicious attempt, there is, as Miss Jessamine says, no knowing what might happen.

In the opinion of the Goose Green, Miss Jessamine has borne her troubles 'wonderfully.' Indeed, to-day some of the less delicate and less intimate of those who see everything from the upper windows say (well behind her back) that 'the old lady seems quite lively with her military beaux again.'

The meaning of this is, that Captain Johnson is leaning over one side of her chair, whilst by the other bends a brother officer who is staying with him, and who has manifested an extraordinary interest in Lollo. He bends lower and lower, and Miss Jessamine calls to the postman to request Lollo to be kind enough to stop, whilst she is fumbling for something which always hangs by her side, and has got entangled with her spectacles.

It is a twopenny trumpet, bought years ago in the village fair, and over it she and Captain Johnson tell, as best they can, between them the story of Jackanapes's ride across the Goose Green; and how he won Lollo—the gipsy's Lollo—the racer Lollo—dear Lollo—faithful Lollo—Lollo the never vanquished—Lollo the tender servant of his old

mistress. And Lollo's ears twitch at every mention of his name.

Their hearer does not speak, but he never moves his eyes from the trumpet, and when the tale is told he lifts Miss Jessamine's hand and presses his heavy black moustache in

silence to her trembling fingers.

The sun, setting gently to his rest, embroiders the sombre foliage of the oak-tree with threads of gold. The Grey Goose is sensible of an atmosphere of repose, and puts up one leg for the night. The grass glows with a more vivid green, and, in answer to a ringing call from Tony, his sisters, fluttering over the daisies in pale-hued muslins, come out of their ever-open door, like pretty pigeons from a dovecote.

And, if the good gossips' eyes do not deceive them, all the Miss Johnsons, and both the officers, go wandering off into the lanes, where bryony wreaths still twine about the

brambles.

A sorrowful story, and ending badly? Nay, Jackanapes, for the end is not yet. A life wasted that might have been useful?

Men who have died for men, in all ages, forgive the

thought!

There is a heritage of heroic example and noble obligation, not reckoned in the wealth of nations, but essential to a nation's life: the contempt of which, in any people, may, not slowly, mean even its commercial fall.

Very sweet are the uses of prosperity, the harvests of peace and progress, the fostering sunshine of health and

happiness, and length of days in the land.

But there be things—oh, sons of what has deserved the name of Great Britain, forget it not!—'the good of' which and 'the use of' which are beyond all calculation of worldly

goods and earthly uses: things such as Love, and Honour, and the Soul of Man, which cannot be bought with a price, and which do not die with death. And they who would fain live happily EVER after, should not leave these things out of the lessons of their lives.



# AMELIA AND THE DWARFS

Y godmother's grandmother knew a good deal about the fairies. Her grandmother had seen a fairy rade on a Roodmas Eve, and she herself could remember a copper vessel of a queer shape which had been left by the elves on some occasion at an old farmhouse among the hills. The following story came from her, and where she got it I do not know. She used to say it was a pleasant tale, with a good moral in the inside of it. My godmother often observed that a tale without a moral was like a nut without a kernel; not worth the cracking. (We called fireside stories 'cracks' in our part of the country.) This is the tale.

## AMELIA

A couple of gentlefolk once lived in a certain part of England. (My godmother never would tell the name either of the place or the people, even if she knew it. She said one ought not to expose one's neighbours' failings more than there was due occasion for.) They had an only child, a daughter, whose name was Amelia. They were an easygoing, good-humoured couple; 'rather soft,' my godmother said, but she was apt to think anybody 'soft' who came from the southern shires, as these people did. Amelia, who had

been born farther north, was by no means so. She had a strong resolute will, and a clever head of her own, though she was but a child. She had a way of her own too, and had it very completely. Perhaps because she was an only child, or perhaps because they were so easy-going, her parents spoiled her. She was, beyond question, the most tiresome little girl in that or any other neighbourhood. From her baby days her father and mother had taken every opportunity of showing her to their friends, and there was not a friend who did not dread the infliction. When the good lady visited her acquaintances, she always took Amelia with her, and if the acquaintances were fortunate enough to see from the windows who was coming, they used to snatch up any delicate knick-knacks or brittle ornaments lying about, and put them away, crying: 'What is to be done?' Here comes Amelia!'

When Amelia came in, she would stand and survey the room, whilst her mother saluted her acquaintance; and if anything struck her fancy, she would interrupt the greetings to draw her mother's attention to it, with a twitch of her shawl. 'Oh, look, Mamma, at that funny bird in the glass case!' or perhaps, 'Mamma, Mamma! There's a new carpet since we were here last'; for, as her mother said, she was 'a very observing child.'

Then she would wander round the room, examining and fingering everything, and occasionally coming back with something in her hand to tread on her mother's dress, and break in upon the ladies' conversation with: 'Mamma! Mamma! What's the good of keeping this old basin? It's been broken and mended, and some of the pieces are quite loose now. I can feel them': or, addressing the lady of the house, 'That's not a real ottoman in the corner. It's a box covered with chintz. I know, for I've looked.'

Then her mamma would say, reprovingly: 'My dear Amelia!'

And perhaps the lady of the house would beg: 'Don't play with that old china, my love; for though it is mended, it is very valuable'; and her mother would add: 'My dear

Amelia, you must not.'

Sometimes the good lady said: 'You must not.' Sometimes she tried 'You must not.' When both these failed, and Amelia was balancing the china bowl on her finger-ends, her mamma would get flurried, and when Amelia flurried her she always rolled her r's, and emphasized her words, so that it sounded thus:

'My dear-r-r-Ramelia! You миsт noт.'

At which Amelia would not so much as look round, till perhaps the bowl slipped from her fingers, and was smashed into unmendable fragments. Then her mamma would exclaim: 'Oh, dear-r-r-r, oh, dear-r-Ramelia!' and the lady of the house would try to look as if it did not matter, and when Amelia and her mother departed would pick up the bits, and pour out her complaints to her lady friends, most of whom had suffered many such damages at the hands of this 'very observing child.'

When the good couple received their friends at home, there was no escaping from Amelia. If it was a dinnerparty, she came in with the dessert, or perhaps sooner. She would take up her position near someone, generally the person most deeply engaged in conversation, and either lean heavily against him or her, or climb on to his or her knee, without being invited. She would break in upon the most interesting discussion with her own little childish affairs, in the following style:

'I've been out to-day. I walked to the town. I jumped across three brooks. Can you jump? Papa gave

me sixpence to-day. I am saving up my money to be rich. You may cut me an orange; no, I'll take it to Mr Brown, he peels it with a spoon and turns the skin back. Mr Brown! Mr Brown! Don't talk to Mamma, but peel me an orange, please. Mr Brown! I'm playing with your finger-glass.' And when the finger-glass full of cold water had been

And when the finger-glass full of cold water had been upset on to Mr Brown's shirt front, Amelia's mamma would cry: 'Oh, dear, oh dear-r-Ramelia!' and carry her off with

the ladies to the drawing-room.

Here she would scramble on to the ladies' knees, or trample out the gathers of their dresses, and fidget with their ornaments, startling some luckless lady by the announcement: 'I've got your bracelet undone at last!' who would find one of the divisions broken open by force, Amelia not understanding the working of a clasp.

Or perhaps two young lady friends would get into a quiet corner for a chat. The observing child would sure to spy them, and run on to them, crushing their flowers and ribbons, and crying: 'You two want to talk secrets, I know. I can hear what you say. I'm going to listen, I am. And I shall tell, too'; when perhaps a knock at the door announced the nurse to take Miss Amelia to bed, and spread a general rapture of relief.

Then Amelia would run to trample and worry her mother, and after much teasing, and clinging, and complaining, the nurse would be dismissed, and the fond mamma would turn to the lady next to her, and say with a smile: 'I suppose I must let her stay up a little. It is such a treat to her, poor

child!'

But it was no treat to the visitors.

Besides tormenting her fellow creatures Amelia had a trick of teasing animals. She was really fond of dogs, but she was still fonder of doing what she was wanted not to do, and of worrying everything and everybody about her. So she used to tread on the tips of their tails, and pretend to give them biscuit, and then hit them on the nose, besides pulling at those few, long, sensitive hairs which thin-skinned

dogs wear on the upper lip.

Now Amelia's mother's acquaintances were so very well bred and amiable that they never spoke their minds to either the mother or the daughter about what they endured from the latter's rudeness, wilfulness, and powers of destruction. But this was not the case with the dogs, and they expressed their sentiments by many a growl and snap. At last one day Amelia was tormenting a snow-white bulldog (who was certainly as well bred and as amiable as any living creature in the kingdom), and she did not see that even his patience was becoming worn out. His pink nose became crimson with increased irritation, his upper lip twitched over his teeth, behind which he was rolling as many warning r's as Amelia's mother herself. She finally held out a bun towards him, and just as he was about to take it she snatched it away and kicked him instead. This fairly exasperated the bulldog, and as Amelia would not let him bite the bun, he bit Amelia's leg.

Her mamma was so distressed that she fell into hysterics, and hardly knew what she was saying. She said the bulldog must be shot for fear he should go mad, and Amelia's wound must be done with a red-hot poker for fear she should go mad (with hydrophobia). And as of course she couldn't bear the pain of this, she must have chloroform, and she would most probably die of that; for as one in several thousands dies annually under chloroform, it was evident that her chance of life was very small indeed. So, as the poor lady said: 'Whether we shoot Amelia and burn the bulldog—at least I mean shoot the bulldog and burn Amelia with

a red-hot poker—or leave it alone; and whether Amelia or the bulldog has chloroform or bears it without—it seems to be death or madness every way!'

And as the doctor did not come fast enough she ran out without her bonnet to meet him, and Amelia's papa, who was very much distressed too, ran after her with her bonnet. Meanwhile the doctor came in by another way, and found Amelia sitting on the dining-room floor with the bulldog, and crying bitterly. She was telling him that they wanted to shoot him, but that they should not, for it was all her fault and not his. But she did not tell him that she was to be burnt with a red-hot poker, for she thought it might hurt his feelings. And then she wept afresh, and kissed the bulldog, and the bulldog kissed her with his red tongue, and rubbed his pink nose against her, and beat his own tail much harder on the floor than Amelia had ever hit it. She said the same things to the doctor, but she told him also that she was willing to be burnt without chloroform if it must be done, and if they would spare the bulldog. And though she looked very white, she meant what she said.

But the doctor looked at her leg, and found that it was only a snap, and not a deep wound; and then he looked at the bulldog, and saw that so far from looking mad, he looked a great deal more sensible than anybody in the house. So he only washed Amelia's leg and bound it up, and she was not burnt with the poker, neither did she get hydrophobia; but she had got a good lesson on manners, and thenceforward she always behaved with the utmost propriety to animals, though she tormented her mother's friends as much as ever.

Now although Amelia's mamma's acquaintances were too polite to complain before her face, they made up for it by what they said behind her back. In allusion to the poor lady's ineffectual remonstrances, one gentleman said that the more mischief Amelia did, the dearer she seemed to grow to her mother. And somebody else replied that however dear she might be as a daughter, she was certainly a very dear friend, and proposed that they should send in a bill for all the damages she had done in the course of the year, as a round robin to her parents at Christmas. From which it may be seen that Amelia was not popular with her parents' friends, as (to do grown-up people justice) good children almost invariably are.

If she was not a favourite in the drawing-room, she was still less so in the nursery, where, besides all the hardships naturally belonging to attendance on a spoilt child, the poor nurse was kept, as she said, 'on the continual go' by Amelia's reckless destruction of her clothes. It was not fair wear and tear, it was not an occasional fall in the mire, or an accidental rent or two during a game at 'Hunt the Hare,' but it was constant wilful destruction which Nurse had to repair as best she might. No entreaties would induce Amelia to 'take care' of anything. She walked obstinately on the muddy side of the road when Nurse pointed out the clean parts, kicking up the dirt with her feet; if she climbed a wall she never tried to free her dress if it had caught; on she rushed, and half a skirt might be left behind for any care she had in the matter. 'They must be mended,' or 'They must be washed,' was all she thought about it.

'You seem to think things clean and mend themselves,

Miss Amelia,' said poor Nurse one day.

'No, I don't,' said Amelia rudely. 'I think you do them; what are you here for?'

But though she spoke in this insolent and unladylike fashion, Amelia really did not realize what the tasks were which her carelessness imposed on other people. When

every hour of Nurse's day had been spent in struggling to keep her wilful young lady regularly fed, decently dressed, and moderately well behaved (except, indeed, those hours when her mother was fighting the same battle downstairs); and when at last, after the hardest struggle of all, she had been got to bed not more than two hours later than her appointed time, even then there was no rest for Nurse. Amelia's mamma could at last lean back in her chair and have a quiet chat with her husband, which was not broken in upon every two minutes, and Amelia herself was asleep; but Nurse must sit up for hours wearing out her eyes by the light of a tallow candle, in fine-darning great, jagged, and most unnecessary holes in Amelia's muslin dresses. Or perhaps she had to wash and iron clothes for Amelia's wear next day. For sometimes she was so very destructive that towards the end of the week she had used up all her clothes and had no clean ones to fall back upon.

Amelia's meals were another source of trouble. She would not wear a pinafore; if it had been put on, she would burst the strings, and perhaps in throwing it away knock her plate of mutton broth over the table-cloth and her own dress. Then she fancied first one thing and then another; she did not like this or that; she wanted a bit cut here or there. Her mamma used to begin by saying: 'My dear-Ramelia, you must not be so wasteful,' and she used to end by saying: 'The dear child has positively no appetite'; which seemed to be a good reason for not wasting any more food upon her; but with Amelia's mamma it only meant that she might try a little cutlet and tomato sauce when she had half finished her roast beef, and that most of the cutlet and all the mashed potato might be exchanged for plum tart and custard; and that when she had spooned up the custard and played with the paste, and put the plum stones on the

table-cloth, she might be tempted with a little Stilton cheese and celery, and exchange that for anything that caught her

fancy in the dessert dishes.

The nurse used to say: 'Many a poor child would thank God for what you waste every meal-time, Miss Amelia,' and to quote a certain good old saying: 'Waste not, want not.' But Amelia's mamma allowed her to send away on her plates what would have fed another child, day after day.

# UNDER THE HAY-COCKS

It was summer, and hay-time. Amelia had been constantly in the hay-field, and the haymakers had constantly wished that she had been anywhere else. She mislaid the rakes, nearly killed herself and several other persons with a fork, and overturned one hay-cock after another as fast as they were made. At tea-time it was hoped that she would depart, but she teased her mamma to have the tea brought into the field, and her mamma said: 'The poor child must have a treat sometimes,' and so it was brought out.

After this she fell off the hay-cart, and was a good deal shaken, but not hurt. So she was taken indoors, and the haymakers worked hard and cleared the field, all but a few

cocks which were left till the morning.

The sun set, the dew fell, the moon rose. It was a lovely night. Amelia peeped from behind the blinds of the drawing-room windows, and saw four hay-cocks, each with a deep shadow reposing at its side. The rest of the field was swept clean, and looked pale in the moonshine. It was a lovely night.

'I want to go out,' said Amelia. 'They will take away those cocks before I can get at them in the morning, and

there will be no more jumping and tumbling. I shall go out and have some fun now.'

'My dear Amelia, you must not,' said her mamma; and her papa added: 'I won't hear of it.' So Amelia went upstairs to grumble to Nurse; but Nurse only said: 'Now, my dear Miss Amelia, do go quietly to bed, like a dear love. The field is all wet with dew. Besides, it's a moonlight night, and who knows what's abroad? You might see the fairies—bless us and sain us!—and what not. There's been a magpie hopping up and down near the house all day, and that's a sign of ill luck.'

'I don't care for magpies,' said Amelia; 'I threw a stone

at that one to-day.'

And she left the nursery and swung downstairs on the rail of the banisters. But she did not go into the drawing-room; she opened the front door and went out into the moonshine.

It was a lovely night. But there was something strange about it. Everything looked asleep, and yet seemed not only awake but watching. There was not a sound, and yet the air seemed full of half-sounds. The child was quite alone, and yet at every step she fancied someone behind her, on one side of her, somewhere, and found it only a rustling leaf or a passing shadow. She was soon in the hay-field where it was just the same; so that when she fancied that something green was moving near the first hay-cock she thought very little of it, till, coming closer, she plainly perceived by the moonlight a tiny man dressed in green, with a tall, pointed hat, and very, very long tips to his shoes, tying his shoestring with his foot on a stubble stalk. He had the most wizened of faces, and when he got angry with his shoe, he pulled so wry a grimace that it was quite laughable. At last he stood up, stepping carefully over the

stubble, went up to the first hay-cock, and drawing out a hollow grass stalk blew upon it till his cheeks were puffed like footballs. And yet there was no sound, only a half-sound, as of a horn blown in the far distance, or in a dream. Presently the point of a tall hat, and finally just such another little wizened face, poked out through the side of the hay-cock.

'Can we hold revel here to-night?' asked the little green man.

'That indeed you cannot,' answered the other; 'we have hardly room to turn round as it is, with all Amelia's dirty frocks.'

'Ah, bah!' said the dwarf; and he walked on to the next hay-cock, Amelia cautiously following.

Here he blew again, and a head was put out as before; on which he said:

'Can we hold revel here to-night?'

'How is it possible,' was the reply, 'when there is not a place where one can so much as set down an acorn cup, for Amelia's broken victuals?'

'Fie! fie!' said the dwarf, and went on to the third, where all happened as before; and he asked the old question:

'Can we hold revel here to-night?'

'Can you dance on glass and crockery shards?' inquired the other. 'Amelia's broken gimcracks are everywhere.'

'Pshaw!' snorted the dwarf, frowning terribly; and when he came to the fourth hay-cock he blew such an angry blast that the grass stalk split into seven pieces. But he met with no better success than before. Only the point of a hat came through the hay, and a feeble voice piped in tones of depression: 'The broken threads would entangle our feet. It's all Amelia's fault. If we could only get hold of her!'

'If she's wise, she'll keep as far from these hay-cocks as she can,' snarled the dwarf angrily; and he shook his fist as much as to say: 'If she did come, I should not receive her

very pleasantly.'

Now with Amelia, to hear that she had better not do something was to make her wish at once to do it; and as she was not at all wanting in courage, she pulled the dwarf's little cloak, just as she would have twitched her mother's shawl, and said (with that sort of snarly whine in which spoilt children generally speak): 'Why shouldn't I come to the hay-cocks if I want to? They belong to my papa, and I shall come if I like. But you have no business here.'

'Nightshade and hemlock!' ejaculated the little man. 'You are not lacking in impudence. Perhaps Your Sauciness is not quite aware how things are distributed in this world?' Saying which he lifted his pointed shoes and

began to dance and sing:

'All under the sun belongs to men, And all under the moon to the fairies. So, so, so! Ho, ho, ho! All under the moon to the fairies.'

As he sang 'Ho, ho, ho!' the little man turned head over heels; and though by this time Amelia would gladly have got away, she could not, for the dwarf seemed to dance and tumble round her, and always to cut off the chance of escape; whilst numberless voices from all around seemed to join in the chorus with:

'So, so, so! Ho, ho, ho! All under the moon to the fairies.'

'And now,' said the little man, 'to work! And you have plenty of work before you, so trip on, to the first hay-cock.' 'I shan't!' said Amelia.

'On with you!' repeated the dwarf.

'I won't!' said Amelia.

But the little man, who was behind her, pinched her funny-bone with his lean fingers, and, as everybody knows, that is agony; so Amelia ran on, and tried to get away. But when she went too fast, the dwarf trod on her heels with his long-pointed shoe, and if she did not go fast enough, he pinched her funny-bone. So for once in her life she was obliged to do as she was told. As they ran, tall hats and wizened faces were popped out on all sides of the hay-cocks, like blanched almonds on a tipsy cake; and whenever the dwarf pinched Amelia, or trod on her heels, the goblins cried 'Ho, ho, ho!' with such horrible contortions as they laughed, that it was hideous to behold them.

'Here is Amelia!' shouted the dwarf when they reached

the first hay-cock.

'Ho, ho, ho!' laughed all the others, as they poked out

here and there from the hay.

'Bring a stock,' said the dwarf; on which the hay was lifted, and out ran six or seven dwarfs, carrying what seemed to Amelia to be a little girl like herself. And when she looked closer, to her horror and surprise the figure was exactly like her—it was her own face, clothes, and everything.

'Shall we kick it into the house?' asked the goblins.

'No,' said the dwarf; 'lay it down by the hay-cock. The father and mother are coming to seek her now.'

When Amelia heard this she began to shriek for help; but she was pushed into the hay-cock, where her loudest cries sounded like the chirruping of a grasshopper.

It was really a fine sight to see the inside of the cock.

Farmers do not like to see flowers in a hay-field, but the fairies do. They had arranged all the buttercups, etc., in

patterns on the hay-walls; bunches of meadow-sweet swung from the roof like censers, and perfumed the air; and the ox-eye daisies which formed the ceiling gave a light like stars. But Amelia cared for none of this. She only struggled to peep through the hay, and she did see her father and mother and nurse come down the lawn, followed by the other servants, looking for her. When they saw the stock they ran to raise it with exclamations of pity and surprise. The stock moaned faintly, and Amelia's mamma wept, and Amelia herself shouted with all her might.

'What's that?' said her mamma. (It is not easy to

deceive a mother.)

'Only the grasshoppers, my dear,' said papa. 'Let us get the poor child home.'

The stock moaned again, and the mother said: 'Oh,

dear! oh, dear-r-Ramelia!' and followed in tears.

'Rub her eyes,' said the dwarf; on which Amelia's eyes were rubbed with some ointment, and when she took a last peep, she could see that the stock was nothing but a hairy imp, with a face like the oldest and most grotesque of apes.

'—and send her below,' added the dwarf. On which the field opened and Amelia was pushed underground.

She found herself on a sort of open heath, where no houses were to be seen. Of course there was no moonshine, and yet it was neither daylight nor dark. There was as the light of early dawn, and every sound was at once clear and dreamy, like the first sounds of the day coming through the fresh air before sunrise. Beautiful flowers crept over the heath, whose tints were constantly changing in the subdued light; and as the hues changed and blended, the flowers gave forth different perfumes. All would have been charming but that at every few paces the paths were blocked by large clothes-baskets full of dirty frocks. And the frocks

were Amelia's. Torn, draggled, wet, covered with sand, mud, and dirt of all kinds, Amelia recognized them.

'You've got to wash them all,' said the dwarf, who was behind her as usual; 'that's what you've come down for—not because your society is particularly pleasant. So the sooner you begin the better.'



'You've got to wash them all,' said the dwarf

'I can't,' said Amelia (she had already learnt that 'I won't' is not an answer for everyone); 'send them up to Nurse and she'll do them. It is her business.'

'What Nurse can do she has done, and now it's time for you to begin,' said the dwarf. 'Sooner or later the mischief done by spoilt children's wilful disobedience comes back on their own hands. Up to a certain point we help them, for we love children, and we are wilful ourselves. But there are limits to everything. If you can't wash your dirty frocks, it is time you learnt to do so, if only that you may know what the trouble is you impose on other people. She will teach you.'

The dwarf kicked out his foot in front of him, and pointed with his long toe to a woman who sat by a fire made upon

the heath, where a pot was suspended from crossed poles. It was like a bit of a gipsy encampment, and the woman seemed to be a real woman, not a fairy—which was the case, as Amelia afterwards found. She had lived underground for many years, and was the dwarfs' servant.

And this was how it came about that Amelia had to wash her dirty frocks. Let any little girl try to wash one of her dresses; not to half-wash it, not to leave it stained with dirty water, but to wash it quite clean. Let her then try to starch and iron it—in short, to make it look as if it had come from the laundress—and she will have some idea of what poor Amelia had to learn to do. There was no help for it. When she was working she very seldom saw the dwarfs; but if she were idle or stubborn, or had any hopes of getting away, one was sure to start up at her elbow and pinch her funny-bone, or poke her in the ribs, till she did her best. Her back ached with stooping over the wash-tub; her hands and arms grew wrinkled with soaking in hot soap-suds, and sore with rubbing. Whatever she did not know how to do, the woman of the heath taught her. At first, whilst Amelia was sulky the woman of the heath was sharp and cross; but when Amelia became willing and obedient she was goodnatured, and even helped her.

The first time that Amelia felt hungry she asked for some food.

'By all means,' said one of the dwarfs; 'there is plenty down here which belongs to you'; and he led her away till they came to a place like the first, except that it was covered with plates of broken meats; all the bits of good meat, pie, pudding, bread and butter, etc., that Amelia had wasted beforetime.

'I can't eat cold scraps like these,' said Amelia, turning away.

'Then what did you ask for food for before you were hungry?' screamed the dwarf, and he pinched her and sent her about her business.

After a while she became so famished that she was glad to beg humbly to be allowed to go for food; and she ate a cold chop and the remains of a rice pudding with thankfulness. How delicious they tasted! She was surprised herself at the good things she had rejected. After a time she fancied she would like to warm up some of the cold meat in a pan, which the woman of the heath used to cook her own dinner in, and she asked for leave to do so.

'You may do anything you like to make yourself comfortable, if you do it yourself,' said she; and Amelia, who had been watching her for many times, became quite expert

in cooking up the scraps.

As there was no real daylight underground, so also there was no night. When the old woman was tired she lay down and had a nap, and when she thought that Amelia had earned a rest, she allowed her to do the same. It was never cold, and it never rained, so they slept on the heath among the flowers.

They say that 'It's a long lane that has no turning,' and the hardest tasks come to an end some time, and Amelia's dresses were clean at last; but then a more wearisome work was before her. They had to be mended. Amelia looked at the jagged rents made by the hedges; the great gaping holes in front where she had put her foot through; the torn tucks and gathers. First she wept, then she bitterly regretted that she had so often refused to do her sewing at home that she was very awkward with her needle. Whether she ever would have got through this task alone is doubtful, but she had by this time become so well behaved and willing that the old woman was kind to her, and, pitying her

blundering attempts, she helped her a great deal; whilst Amelia would cook the old woman's victuals, or repeat stories and pieces of poetry to amuse her.

'How glad I am that I ever learnt anything!' thought the poor child. 'Everything one learns seems to come in

useful some time.'

At last the dresses were finished.

'Do you think I shall be allowed to go home now?' Amelia asked of the woman of the heath.

'Not yet,' said she; 'you have got to mend the broken gimcracks next.'

'But when I have done all my tasks,' Amelia said, 'will

they let me go then?'

'That depends,' said the woman, and she sat silent over the fire; but Amelia wept so bitterly that she pitied her and said: 'Only dry your eyes, for the fairies hate tears, and I will tell you all I know and do the best for you I can. You see, when your first came you were—excuse me!—such an unlicked cub; such a peevish, selfish, wilful, useless, and ill-mannered little miss, that neither the fairies nor anybody else were likely to keep you any longer than necessary. But now you are such a willing, handy, and civil little thing, and so pretty and graceful withal, that I think it is very likely that they will want to keep you altogether. I think you had better make up your mind to it. They are kindly little folk, and will make a pet of you in the end.'

'Oh, no! no!' moaned poor Amelia; 'I want to be with my mother, my poor dear mother! I want to make up for being a bad child so long. Besides, surely that "stock" as they called her, will want to come back to her own people.'

'As to that,' said the woman, 'after a time the stock will affect mortal illness, and will then take possession of the first black cat she sees, and in that shape leave the house,

and come home. But the figure that is like you will remain lifeless in the bed and will be duly buried. Then your people, believing you to be dead, will never look for you, and you will always remain here. However, as this distresses you so I will give you some advice. Can you dance?'

'Yes,' said Amelia; 'I did attend pretty well to my dancing lessons. I was considered rather clever about it.'

'At any spare moments you find,' continued the woman, 'dance, dance all your dances, and as well as you can. The dwarfs love dancing.'

'And then?' said Amelia.

'Then, perhaps some night they will take you up to dance with them in the meadows above-ground.'

'But I could not get away. They would tread on my

heels-oh! I could never escape them.'

'I know that,' said the woman; 'your only chance is this. If ever, when dancing in the meadows, you can find a four-leaved clover, hold it in your hand, and wish to be at home. Then no one can stop you. Meanwhile I advise you to seem happy, that they may think you are content, and have forgotten the world. And dance, above all, dance!'

And Amelia, not to be behindhand, began then and there to dance some pretty figures on the heath. As she was

dancing the dwarf came by.

'Ho, ho!' said he, 'you can dance, can you?'

'When I am happy I can,' said Amelia, performing several graceful movements as she spoke.

'What are you pleased about now?' snapped the dwarf suspiciously.

'Have I not reason?' said Amelia. 'The dresses are washed and mended.'

'Then up with them!' returned the dwarf. On which

half a dozen elves popped the whole lot into a big basket and kicked them up into the world, where they found their way to the right wardrobes somehow.

As the woman of the heath had said, Amelia was soon set to a new task. When she bade the old woman farewell, she asked if she could do nothing for her if ever she got at liberty herself.

'Can I do nothing to get you back to your old home?' Amelia cried, for she thought of others now as well as herself.

'No, thank you,' returned the old woman; 'I am used to this and do not care to return. I have been here a long time—how long I do not know; for as there is neither daylight nor dark we have no measure of time—long, I am sure, very long. The light and noise up yonder would now be too much for me. But I wish you well, and, above all, remember to dance!'

The new scene of Amelia's labours was a more rocky part of the heath, where grey granite boulders served for seats and tables, and sometimes for workshops and anvils, as in one place, where a grotesque and grimy old dwarf sat forging rivets to mend china and glass. A fire in a hollow of the boulder served for a forge, and on the flatter part was his anvil. The rocks were covered in all directions with the knick-knacks, ornaments, etc., that Amelia had at various times destroyed.

'If you please, sir,' she said to the dwarf, 'I am Amelia.'
The dwarf left off blowing at his forge and looked at

'Then I wonder you're not ashamed of yourself,' said he.

'I am ashamed of myself,' said poor Amelia, 'very much ashamed. I should like to mend these things if I can.'

'Well, you can't say more than that,' said the dwarf in a mollified tone, for he was a kindly little creature; 'bring that china bowl here, and I'll show you how to set to work.

Poor Amelia did not get on very fast, but she tried her best. As to the dwarf, it was truly wonderful to see how he worked. Things seemed to mend themselves at his touch, and he was so proud of his skill, and so particular, that he generally did over again the things which Amelia had done after her fashion. The first time he gave her a few minutes in which to rest and amuse herself, she held out her little skirt, and began one of her prettiest dances.

'Rivets and trivets!' shrieked the little man, 'how you dance! It is charming! I say it is charming! On with you! Fa, la, fa! La, fa la! It gives me the fidgets in my shoe-points to see you!' and forthwith down he jumped,

and began capering about.

'I am a good dancer myself,' said the little man. you know the "Hop, Skip, and a Jump" dance?"

'I do not think I do,' said Amelia.

'It is much admired,' said the dwarf, 'when I dance it'; and he thereupon tucked up the little leathern apron in which he worked, and performed some curious antics on

one leg.

'That is the Hop,' he observed, pausing for a moment. 'The Skip is thus. You throw out your left leg as high and as far as you can, and as you drop on the toe of your left foot you fling out the right leg in the same manner, and so on. This is the Jump,' with which he turned a somersault and disappeared from view. When Amelia next saw him he was sitting cross-legged on his boulder. 'Good, wasn't it?' he said.

'Wonderful!' Amelia replied.

'Now it's your turn again,' said the dwarf.

'But Amelia cunningly replied: 'I'm afraid I must go on

with my work.'

'Pshaw!' said the little tinker. 'Give me your work. I can do more in a minute than you in a month, and better to boot. Now dance again.'

'Do you know this?' said Amelia, and she danced a few

paces of a polka mazurka.

'Admirable!' cried the little man. 'Stay'—and he drew an old violin from behind the rock; 'now dance again, and mark the time well so that I may catch the measure, and then I will accompany you.'

Which accordingly he did, improvising a very spirited tune, which had, however, the peculiar subdued and weird

effect of all the other sounds in this strange region.

'It was smashed to atoms in the world and thrown away. But, ho, ho, ho! there is nothing that I cannot mend, and a mended fiddle is an amended fiddle. It improves the tone. Now teach me that dance, and I will patch up all the rest of the gimcracks. Is it a bargain?'

'By all means,' said Amelia; and she began to explain

the dance to the best of her ability.

'Charming, charming!' cried the dwarf. 'We have no such dance ourselves. We only dance hand in hand, and round and round, when we dance together. Now I will learn the step, and then I will put my arm round your waist

and dance with you.'

Amelia looked at the dwarf. He was very smutty, and old, and wizened. Truly, a queer partner! But 'handsome is that handsome does'; and he had done her a good turn. So when he had learnt the step he put his arm round Amelia's waist and they danced together. His shoe-points

were very much in the way, but otherwise he danced very well.

Then he set to work on the broken ornaments, and they were all very soon 'as good as new.' But they were not kicked up into the world, for as the dwarfs said, they would be sure to break on the road. So they kept them and used them; and I fear that no benefit came from the little tinker's skill to Amelia's mamma's acquaintance in this matter.

'Have I any other tasks?' Amelia inquired.

'One more,' said the dwarfs; and she was led farther on to a smooth mossy green, thickly covered with what looked like bits of broken thread. One would think it had been a milliner's work-room from the first invention of needles and thread.

'What are these?' Amelia asked.

'They are the broken threads of all the conversations you have interrupted,' was the reply; 'and pretty dangerous work it is to dance here now, with threads getting round one's shoe-points. Dance a hornpipe in a herring-net, and you'll know what it is!'

Amelia began to pick up the threads, but it was tedious work. She had cleared a yard or two, and her back was aching terribly, when she heard the fiddle and the mazurka behind her; and looking round she saw the old dwarf, who was playing away, and making the most hideous grimaces as his chin pressed the violin.

'Dance, my lady, dance!' he shouted.

'I do not think I can,' said Amelia; 'I am so weary with

stooping over my work.'

'Then rest a few minutes,' he answered, 'and I will play you a jig. A jig is a beautiful dance, such life, such spirit! So!'

And he played faster and faster, his arm, his face, his

fiddle-bow all seemed working together; and as he played,

the threads danced themselves into three heaps.

'That is not bad, is it?' said the dwarf; 'and now for our own dance,' and he played the mazurka. 'Get the measure well into your head. Lâ, la fă lâ! Lâ, la fă lâ! So!'

And throwing away his fiddle, he caught Amelia round the waist, and they danced as before. After which she had no difficulty in putting the three heaps of thread into a basket.

'Where are these to be kicked to?' asked the young goblins.

'To the four winds of heaven,' said the old dwarf. 'There are very few drawing-room conversations worth putting together a second time. They are not like old china bowls.'

#### By Moonlight

Thus Amelia's tasks were ended; but not a word was said of her return home. The dwarfs were now very kind, and made so much of her that it was evident that they meant her to remain with them. Amelia often cooked for them, and she danced and played with them, and never showed a sign of discontent; but her heart ached for home, and when she was alone she would bury her face in the flowers and cry for her mother.

One day she overheard the dwarfs in consultation.

'The moon is full to-morrow,' said one. ('Then I have been a month down here,' thought Amelia; 'it was full moon that night.') 'Shall we dance in the Mary Meads?'

'By all means,' said the old tinker dwarf; 'and we will

take Amelia, and dance my dance.'

'Is it safe?' said another.

'Look how content she is,' said the old dwarf; 'and oh!

how she dances; my feet tickle at the bare thought.'

'The ordinary run of mortals do not see us,' continued the objector; 'but *she* is visible to anyone. And there are men and women who wander in the moonlight, and the Mary Meads are near her old home.'

'I will make her a hat of touchwood,' said the old dwarf, 'so that even if she is seen it will look like a will-o'-the-wisp bobbing up and down. If she does not come, I will not. I must dance my dance. You do not know what it is! We two alone move together with a grace which even here is remarkable. But when I think that up yonder we shall have attendant shadows echoing our movements, I long for the moment to arrive.'

'So be it,' said the others; and Amelia wore the touchwood

hat, and went up with them to the Mary Meads.

Amelia and the dwarf danced the mazurka, and their shadows, now as short as themselves, then long and gigantic, danced beside them. As the moon went down, and the

shadows lengthened, the dwarf was in raptures.

'When one sees how colossal one's very shadow is,' he remarked, 'one knows one's true worth. You also have a good shadow. We are partners in the dance, and I think we will be partners for life. But I have not fully considered the matter, so this is not to be regarded as a formal proposal.' And he continued to dance, singing: 'Lâ, la, fă, lâ, lâ, la, fă, lâ.' It was highly admired.

The Mary Meads lay a little below the house where Amelia's parents lived, and once during the night her father, who was watching by the sick-bed of the stock, looked out of

the window.

'How lovely the moonlight is!' he murmured; 'but, dear me! there is a will-o'-the-wisp yonder. I had no idea

the Mary Meads were so damp.' Then he pulled the blind down and went back into the room.

As for poor Amelia, she found no four-leaved clover, and at cock-crow they all went underground.

'We will dance on Hunch Hill to-morrow,' said the dwarfs.

All went as before; not a clover plant of any kind did Amelia see, and at cock-crow the revel broke up.

On the following night they danced in the hay-field. The old stubble was now almost hidden by green clover. There was a grand fairy dance—a round dance, which does not mean, as with us, a dance for two partners, but a dance where all join hands and dance round and round in a circle with appropriate antics. Round they went, faster and faster, the pointed shoes now meeting in the centre like the spokes of a wheel, now kicked out behind like spikes, and then scamper, caper, hurry! They seemed to fly, when suddenly the ring broke at one corner, and nothing being stronger than its weakest point, the whole circle were sent flying over the field.

'Ho, ho, ho!' laughed the dwarfs, for they are good-

humoured little folk, and do not mind a tumble.

'Ha, ha, ha!' laughed Amelia, for she had fallen with

her fingers on a four-leaved clover.

She put it behind her back, for the old tinker dwarf was coming up to her, wiping the mud from his face with his leathern apron.

'Now for our dance!' he shrieked. 'And I have made up my mind—partners now and partners always. You are incomparable. For three hundred years I have not met with your equal.'

But Amelia held the four-leaved clover above her head,

and cried from her very heart: 'I want to go home!'

The dwarf gave a hideous yell of disappointment, and at this instant the stock came tumbling head over heels into the midst, crying: 'Oh, the pills, the powders, and the draughts! Oh, the lotions and embrocations! Oh, the blisters, the poultices, and the plasters! men may well be so short-lived!'

And Amelia found herself in bed in her own home.

## AT HOME AGAIN

By the side of Amelia's bed stood a little table, on which were so many big bottles of medicine, that Amelia smiled to think of all the stock must have had to swallow during the month past. There was an open Bible on it too, in which Amelia's mother was reading, whilst tears trickled slowly down her pale cheeks. The poor lady looked so thin and ill, so worn with sorrow and watching, that Amelia's heart smote her, as if someone had given her a sharp blow.

'Mamma, Mamma! Mother, my dear, dear Mother!'

The tender, humble, loving tone of voice was so unlike Amelia's old imperious snarl that her mother hardly recognized it; and when she saw Amelia's eyes full of intelligence instead of the delirium of fever, and that (though older and thinner and rather pale) she looked wonderfully well, the poor worn-out lady could hardly restrain herself from falling into hysterics for very joy.

'Dear Mamma, I want to tell you all about it,' said

Amelia, kissing the kind hand that stroked her brow.

But it appeared that the doctor had forbidden conversation; and though Amelia knew it would do her no harm, she yielded to her mother's wish and lay still and silent.

'Now, my love, it is time to take your medicine.'

But Amelia pleaded: 'Oh, Mamma, indeed I don't want any medicine. I am quite well, and would like to get up.'

'Ah, my dear child!' cried her mother, 'what I have suffered in inducing you to take your medicine, and yet see

what good it has done you.'

'I hope you will never suffer any more from my wilfulness,' said Amelia; and she swallowed two table-spoonfuls of a mixture labelled 'To be well shaken before taken,' without even a wry face.

Presently the doctor came.

'You're not so very angry at the sight of me to-day, my little lady, eh?' he said.

'I have not seen you for a long time,' said Amelia; 'but I know you have been here attending a stock who looked like me. If your eyes had been touched with fairy ointment, however, you would have been aware that it was a fairy imp, and a very ugly one, covered with hair. I have been living in terror lest it should go back underground in the shape of a black cat. However, thanks to the four-leaved clover, and the old woman of the heath, I am at home again.'

On hearing this rodomontade, Amelia's mother burst into tears, for she thought the poor child was still raving with fever. But the doctor smiled pleasantly, and said: 'Ay, ay, to be sure,' with a little nod, as one should say: 'We know all about it'; and laid two fingers in a casual manner on Amelia's wrist.

'But she is wonderfully better, madam,' he said afterwards to her mamma; 'the brain has been severely tried, but she is marvellously improved: in fact, it is an effort of nature, a most favourable effort, and we can but assist the rally; we will change the medicine.' Which he did, and very wisely assisted nature with a bottle of pure water flavoured with tincture of roses.

'And it was so very kind of him to give me his directions in poetry,' said Amelia's mamma; 'for I told him my memory, which is never good, seemed going completely from anxiety, and if I had done anything wrong just now, I should never have forgiven myself. And I always found poetry easier to remember than prose'—which puzzled everybody, the doctor included, till it appeared that she had ingeniously discovered a rhyme in his orders:

To be kept cool and quiet, With light nourishing diet.

Under which treatment Amelia was soon pronounced to be well.

She made another attempt to relate her adventures, but she found that not even Nurse would believe in them.

'Why you told me yourself I might meet with the fairies,'

said Amelia reproachfully.

'So I did, my dear,' Nurse replied, 'and they say that it's that put it into your head. And I'm sure what you say about the dwarfs and all is as good as a printed book, though you can't think that ever I would have let any dirty clothes you can't think that ever I would have let any dirty clothes store up like that, let alone your frocks, my dear. But, for pity's sake, Miss Amelia, don't go on about it to your mother, for she thinks you'll never get your senses right again, and she has fretted enough about you, poor lady; and nursed you night and day till she is nigh worn out. And anybody can see you've been ill, miss, you've grown so, and look paler and older like. Well, to be sure, as you say, if you'd been washing and working for a month in a place without a bit of sun, or a bed to lie on, and scraps to eat, it would be enough to do it; and many's the poor child that has to, and gets worn and old before her time. But, my dear, whatever you think, give in to your mother; you'll





See page 131 'AND NOW,' SAID THE LITTLE MAN, 'TO WORK! . . . '

never repent giving in to your mother, my dear, the longest day you live.'

So Amelia kept her own counsel. But she had one

confidant.

When her parents brought the stock home on the night of Amelia's visit to the hay-cocks, the bulldog's conduct had been most strange. His usual good humour appeared to have been exchanged for incomprehensible fury, and he was with difficulty prevented from flying at the stock, who on her part showed an anger and dislike fully equal to his.

Finally the bulldog had been confined to the stable, where he remained the whole month, uttering from time to time such howls, with his snub nose in the air, that poor nurse

quite gave up hope of Amelia's recovery.

'For indeed, my dear, they do say that a howling dog is a

sign of death, and it was more than I could bear.'

But the day after Amelia's return, as Nurse was leaving the room with a tray which had carried some of the light nourishing diet ordered by the doctor, she was knocked down, tray and all, by the bulldog, who came tearing into the room, dragging a chain and dirty rope after him, and nearly choked by the desperate efforts which had finally effected his escape from the stable. And he jumped straight on to the end of Amelia's bed, where he lay, thudding with his tail, and giving short whines of ecstasy. And as Amelia begged that he might be left, and as it was evident that he would bite anyone who tried to take him away, he became established as chief nurse. When Amelia's meals were brought to the bedside on a tray, he kept a fixed eye on the plates, as if to see if her appetite were improving. And he would even take a snack himself, with an air of great affability.

And when Amelia told him her story, she could see by

his eyes, and his nose, and his ears, and his tail, and the way he growled whenever the stock was mentioned, that he knew all about it. As, on the other hand, he had no difficulty in conveying to her by sympathetic whines the sentiment: 'Of course I would have helped you if I could; but they tied me up, and this disgusting old rope has taken me a month to worry through.'

So, in spite of the past, Amelia grew up good and gentle, unselfish and considerate for others. She was unusually clever, as those who have been with the 'Little People' are

said always to be.

And she became so popular with her mother's acquaintances that they said: 'We will no longer call her Amelia, for it is a name we learnt to dislike, but we will call her Amy, that is to say, "Beloved."'

And did my godmother's grandmother believe that Amelia had really been with the fairies, or did she think it was all fever ravings?

That, indeed, she never said, but she always observed that it was a pleasant tale with a good moral, which was surely enough for anybody.

# THE LAND OF LOST TOYS

An Earthquake in the Nursery

IT was certainly an aggravated offence. It is generally understood in families that 'boys will be boys,' but there is a limit to the forbearance implied in the extenuating axiom. Master Sam was condemned to the back nursery for the rest of the day.

He always had had the knack of breaking his own toys—he not infrequently broke other people's; but accidents will happen, and his twin sister and factorum, Dot, was

long-suffering.

Dot was fat, resolute, hasty, and devotedly unselfish. When Sam scalped her new doll, and fastened the glossy black curls to a wigwam improvised with the curtains of the four-post bed in the best bedroom, Dot was sorely tried. As her eyes passed from the crownless doll on the floor to the floss-silk ringlets hanging from the bed-furniture, her round rosy face grew rounder and rosier, and tears burst from her eyes. But in a moment more she clenched her little fists, forced back the tears, and gave vent to her favourite saying: 'I don't care.'

That sentence was Dot's bane and antidote; it was her vice and her virtue. It was her standing consolation, and it brought her into all her scrapes. It was her one panacea for all the ups and downs of her life (and in the nursery

where Sam developed his organ of destructiveness there were ups and downs not a few); and it was the form her naughtiness took when she was naughty.

'Don't Care fell into a goose-pond, Miss Dot,' said Nurse,

on one occasion of the kind.

'I don't care if he did,' said Miss Dot; and as nurse knew no further feature of the goose-pond adventure which met this view of it, she closed the subject by putting Dot into the corner.

In the strength of *Don't care*, and her love for Sam, Dot bore much and long. Her dolls perished by ingenious but untimely deaths. Her toys were put to purposes for which they were never intended and suffered accordingly. But Sam was penitent and Dot was heroic. Florinda's scalp was mended with a hot knitting-needle and a perpetual bonnet, and Dot rescued her paint-brushes from the gluepot, and smelt her indiarubber as it boiled down in Sam's waterproof manufactory, with long-suffering forbearance.

There are, however, as we have said, limits to everything. An earthquake celebrated with the whole contents of the

toy cupboard is not to be borne.

The matter was this. Early one morning Sam announced that he had a glorious project on hand. He was going to give a grand show and entertainment, far surpassing all the nursery imitations of circuses, conjurors, lectures on chemistry, and so forth, with which they had ever amused themselves. He refused to confide his plans to the faithful Dot; but he begged her to lend him all the toys she possessed in return for which she was to be the sole spectator of the fun. He let out that the idea had suggested itself to him after the sight of a diorama to which they had been taken, but he would not allow that it was anything of the same kind; in proof of which she was at liberty to keep back her

paint-box. Dot tried hard to penetrate the secret, and to reserve some of her things from the general conscription. But Sam was obstinate. He would tell nothing, and he wanted everything. The dolls, the bricks (especially the bricks), the tea-things, the German farm, the Swiss cottages, the animals, and all the dolls' furniture. Dot gave them with a doubtful mind, and consoled herself as she watched Sam carrying pieces of board and a green table cover into the back nursery, with the prospect of the show. At last, Sam threw open the door and ushered her into the

nursery rocking-chair.

The boy had certainly some constructive as well as destructive talent. Upon a sort of impromptu table covered with green cloth he had arranged all the toys in rough imitation of a town, with its streets and buildings. The relative proportion of the parts was certainly not good; but it was not Sam's fault that the doll's house and the German farm, his own brick buildings, and the Swiss cottages, were all on totally different scales of size. He had ingeniously put the larger things in the foreground, keeping the small farm-buildings from the German box at the far end of the streets, yet after all the perspective was extreme. The effect of three large horses from the toy stables in front, with the cows from the small Noah's Ark in the distance, was admirable; but the big dolls seated in an unroofed building, made with the wooden bricks on no architectural principle but that of a pound, and taking tea out of the new china teathings, looked simply ridiculous.

Dot's eyes, however, saw no defects, and she clapped

vehemently.

'Here, ladies and gentlemen,' said Sam, waving his hand politely towards the rocking-chair, 'you see the great city of Lisbon, the capital of Portugal——'

At this display of geographical accuracy Dot fairly cheered, and rocked herself to and fro in unmitigated enjoyment.

'—as it appeared,' continued the showman, 'on the morning of 1st November 1755.'

Never having had occasion to apply 'Mangnall's Questions' to the exigencies of everyday life, this date in no way disturbed Dot's comfort.

'In this house,' Same and define the C.D.

'In this house,' Sam proceeded, 'a party of Portuguese ladies of rank may be seen taking tea together.'

'Breakfast, you mean,' said Dot, 'you said it was in the

morning, you know.'

'Well, they took tea to their breakfast,' said Sam. 'Don't interrupt me, Dot. You are the audience, and you mustn't speak. Here you see the horses of the English ambassador out airing with his groom. There you see two peasants—no! they are not Noah and his wife, Dot, and if you go on talking I shall shut up. I say they are peasants peacefully driving cattle. At this moment a rumbling sound startles everyone in the city'—here Sam rolled some croquet balls up and down in a boy, but the dolls sat as quiet as before up and down in a box, but the dolls sat as quiet as before, and Dot alone was startled—'this was succeeded by a slight shock'—here he shook the table, which upset some of the shock—here he shook the table, which upset some of the buildings belonging to the German farm.—'Some houses fell.'—Dot began to look anxious.—'This shock was followed by several others'—'Take care,' she begged—'of increasing magnitude.'—'Oh, Sam!' Dot shrieked, jumping up, 'you're breaking the china!'—'The largest buildings shook to their foundations.'—'Sam! Sam! the doll's house is falling,' Dot cried, making wild efforts to save it: but Sam held her back with one arm, while with the other he began to pull at the boards which formed his table. other he began to pull at the boards which formed his table. - Suddenly the ground split and opened with a fearful

yawn'—Dot's shrieks shamed the impassive dolls, as Sam jerked out the boards by a dexterous movement, and doll's house, brick buildings, the farm, the Swiss cottages, and the whole toy-stock of the nursery sank together in ruins. Quite unabashed by the evident damage, Sam continued—'and in a moment the whole magnificent city of Lisbon was swallowed up. Dot! Dot! don't be a muff! What is the matter? It's splendid fun. Things must be broken some time, and I'm sure it was exactly like the real thing. Dot! why don't you speak? Dot! my dear Dot! You don't care, do you? I didn't think you'd mind it so. It was such a splendid earthquake. Oh! try not to go on like that!'

But Dot's feelings were far beyond her own control, much more that of Master Sam, at this moment. She was gasping and choking, and when at last she found breath it was only to throw herself on her face upon the floor with bitter and uncontrollable sobbing.

It was certainly a mild punishment that condemned Master Sam to the back nursery for the rest of the day. It had, however, this additional severity, that during the afternoon Aunt Penelope was expected to arrive.

## AUNT PENELOPE

Aunt Penelope was one of those dear, good souls who, single themselves, have, as real or adopted relatives, the interests of a dozen families, instead of one, at heart. There are few people whose youth has not owned the influence of at least one such friend. It may be a good habit, the first interest in some life-loved pursuit or favourite author, some pretty feminine art, or delicate womanly counsel enforced by those narratives of real life that are more interesting than

any fiction; it may be only the periodical return of gifts and kindness, and the store of family histories that no one else can tell; but we all owe something to such an aunt or uncle—the fairy godmothers of real life.

The benefits which Sam and Dot reaped from Aunt Penelope's visits may be summed up under the heads of presents and stories, with a general leaning to indulgence in the matters of punishment, lessons, and going to bed, which perhaps is natural to aunts and uncles who have no positive responsibilities in the young people's education, and are not the daily sufferers by the lack of due discipline.

Aunt Penelope's presents were lovely. Aunt Penelope's stories were charming. There was generally a moral wrapped up in them, like the motto in a cracker-bonbon; but it was quite in the inside, so to speak, and there was

abundance of smart paper and 'sugar-plums.'

All things considered, it was certainly most proper that the much-injured Dot should be dressed out in her best, and have access to dessert, the dining-room, and Aunt Penelope, whilst Sam was kept upstairs. And yet it was Dot who (her first burst of grief being over) fought stoutly for his pardon all the time she was being dressed, and was afterwards detected in the act of endeavouring to push fragments of raspberry tart through the nursery keyhole.

'You good thing!' Sam emphatically exclaimed, as he heard her in fierce conflict on the other side of the door with the nurse who found her. 'You good thing! leave me

alone, for I deserve it.'

He really was very penitent. He was too fond of Dot not to regret the unexpected degree of distress he had caused her; and Dot made much of his penitence in her intercessions in the drawing-room.

'Sam is so very sorry,' she said; 'he says he knows he

deserves it. I think he ought to come down. He is so very sorry!'

Aunt Penelope, as usual, took the lenient side, joining her entreaties to Dot's, and it ended in Master Sam's being hurriedly scrubbed and brushed, and shoved into his black velvet suit, and sent downstairs, rather red about the eyelids, and looking very sheepish.

'Oh, Dot!' he exclaimed, as soon as he could get her into a corner, 'I am so very, very sorry! particularly about the

tea-things.'

'Never mind,' said Dot, 'I don't care; and I've asked for a story, and we're going into the library.' As Dot said this she jerked her head expressively in the direction of the sofa, where Aunt Penelope was just casting on stitches preparatory to beginning a pair of her famous ribbed socks for Papa, whilst she gave to Mamma's conversation that sympathy which (like her knitting-needles) was always at the service of her large circle of friends. Dot anxiously watched the bow on the top of her cap as it danced and nodded with the force of Mamma's observations. At last it gave a little chorus of jerks, as one should say, 'Certainly, undoubtedly.' And then the story came to an end, and Dot, who had been slowly creeping nearer, fairly took Aunt Penelope by the hand, and carried her off, knitting and all, to the library.

'Now, please,' said Dot, when she had struggled into a

chair that was too tall for her.

'Stop a minute!' cried Sam, who was perched in the opposite one, 'the horse-hair tickles my legs.'

'Put your pocket handkerchief under them, as I do,' said

Dot. 'Now, Aunt Penelope.'

'No, wait,' groaned Sam; 'it isn't big enough; it only covers one leg.'

Dot slid down again, and ran to Sam.

'Take my handkerchief for the other.'

'But what will you do?' said Sam.
'Oh, I don't care,' said Dot, scrambling back into her place. 'Now, Aunty, please.'

And Aunt Penelope began.

# 'THE LAND OF LOST TOYS

'I suppose people who have children transfer their childish follies and fancies to them, and become properly sedate and grown-up. Perhaps it is because I am an old maid, and have none, that some of my nursery whims stick to me, and I find myself liking things, and wanting things, quite out of keeping with my cap and time of life. For instance. Anything in the shape of a toyshop (from a London bazaar to a village window, with Dutch dolls, leather balls, and wooden battledores) quite unnerves me, so to speak. When I see one of those boxes containing a jar, a churn, a kettle, a pan, a coffee-pot, a cauldron on three legs, and sundry dishes, all of the smoothest wood, and with the immemorial red flower on one side of each vessel, I fairly long for an excuse for playing with them, and for trying (positively for the last time) if the lids do come off, and whether the kettle will (literally, as well as metaphorically) hold water. Then if, by good or ill luck, there is a child flattening its little nose against the window with longing eyes, my purse is soon empty; and as it toddles off with a square parcel under one arm, and a lovely being in black ringlets and white tissue-paper in the other, I wish that I were worthy of being asked to join the ensuing play. Don't suppose there is any generosity in this. I have only done what we are all glad to do. I have found an excuse for indulging a pet weakness. As I said, it is not merely the new and expensive toys that attract me; I think my weakest corner is where the penny boxes lie, the wooden tea-things (with the abovenamed flower in miniature), the soldiers on their lazy tongs, the ninepins, and the tiny farm.

'I need hardly say that the toy-booth in a village fair tries me very hard. It tried me in childhood, when I was often short of pence, and when "the Feast" came once a year. It never tried me more than on one occasion, lately, when I

was revisiting my old home.

'It was deep midsummer, and the Feast. I had children with me, of course (I find children, somehow, wherever I go), and when we got into the fair there were children of people whom I had known as children, with just the same love for a monkey going up one side of a yellow stick and coming down the other, and just as strong heads for a giddygo-round on a hot day and a diet of peppermint lozenges, as their fathers and mothers before them. There were the very same names—and here and there it seemed the very same faces—I knew so long ago. A few shillings were indeed well expended in brightening those familiar eyes: and then there were the children with me. . . . Besides, there really did seem to be an unusually nice assortment of things, and the man was very intelligent (in reference to his wares). . . . Well, well! It was two o'clock p.m. when we went in at one end of that glittering avenue of drums, dolls, trumpets, accordions, work-boxes, and what not; but what o'clock it was when I came out at the other end, with a shilling and some coppers in my pocket, and was cheered, I can't say, though I should like to have been able to be accurate about the time, because of what followed.

'I thought the best thing I could do was to get out of the fair at once, so I went up the village and struck off across some fields into a little wood that lay near. (A favourite

walk in old times.) As I turned out of the booth, my foot struck aganst one of the yellow sticks of the climbing monkeys. The monkey was gone, and the stick broken. It set me thinking as I walked along.

'What an untold number of pretty and ingenious things one does (not wear out in honourable wear and tear, but) utterly lose, and wilfully destroy, in one's young days—things that would have given pleasure to so many more young eyes, if they had been kept a little longer—things that one would so value in later years, if some of them had survived the dissipating and destructive days of nurserydom. I recalled a young lady I knew whose room was adorned with knick-knacks of a kind I had often envied. They were not plaster figures, old china, waxwork flowers under glass, or ordinary ornaments of any kind. They were her old toys. Perhaps she had not had many of them, and had been the more careful of those she had. She had certainly been very fond of them, and had kept more of them than anyone I ever knew. A faded doll slept in its cradle at the foot of her bed. A wooden elephant stood on the dressing-table, and a poodle that had lost his bark put out a red-flannel tongue with quixotic violence at a windmill on the opposite corner of the mantelpiece. Everything had a story of its own. Indeed the whole room must have been redolent with the sweet story of childhood, of which the toys were the illustrations, or like a poem of which the toys were the verses. She used to have children to play with them sometimes, and this was a high honour. She is married now and has children of her own, who on birthdays and holidays will forsake the newest of their own possessions to play with "mamma's toys."

'I was roused from these recollections by the pleasure of

getting into the wood.

'If I have a stronger predilection than my love for toys, it is my love for woods, and, like the other, it dates from childhood. It was born and bred with me, and I fancy will stay with me till I die. The soothing scents of leaf-mould, moss, and fern (not to speak of flowers)—the pale green veil in spring, the rich shade in summer, the rustle of the dry leaves in autumn, I suppose an old woman may enjoy all these, my dears, as well as you. But I think I could make "fairy jam" of hips and haws in acorn cups now, if any child would be condescending enough to play with me.

'This wood, too, had associations.

'I strolled on in leisurely enjoyment, and at last seated myself at the foot of a tree to rest. I was hot and tired; partly with the midday heat and the atmosphere of the fair, partly with the exertion of calculating change in the purchase of articles ranging in price from three-farthings upwards. The tree under which I sat was an old friend. There was a hole at its base that I knew well. Two roots covered with exquisite moss ran out from each side, like the arms of a chair, and between them there accumulated year after year a rich though tiny store of dark leaf-mould. We always used to say that fairies lived within, though I never saw anything go in myself but wood-beetles. There was one going in at that moment.

'How little the wood was changed! I bent my head for a few seconds, and, closing my eyes, drank in the delicious and suggestive scents of earth and moss about the dear old tree. I had been so long parted from the place that I could hardly believe that I was in the old familiar spot. Surely it was only one of the many dreams in which I had played again beneath those trees! But when I reopened my eyes there was the same hole, and, oddly enough, the same beetle or one just like it. I had not noticed till that moment how

much larger the hole was than it used to be in my young days.

"I suppose the rain and so forth wears them away in time," I said vaguely.

"I suppose it does," said the beetle politely; "will you walk in?"

'I don't know why I was not so overpoweringly astonished as you would imagine. I think I was a good deal absorbed in considering the size of the hole, and the very foolish wish that seized me to do what I had often longed to do in childhood, and creep in. I had so much regard for propriety as to see that there was no one to witness the escapade. Then I tucked my skirts round me, put my spectacles into my pocket for fear they should get broken, and in I went.

'I must say one thing. A wood is charming enough (no one appreciates it more than myself), but, if you have never been there, you have no idea how much nicer it is inside than on the surface. Oh, the mosses—the gorgeous mosses! The fretted lichens! The fungi like flowers for beauty, and the flowers like nothing you have ever seen!

'Where the beetle went to I don't know. I could stand up now quite well, and I wandered on till dusk in unwearied admiration. I was among some large beeches as it grew dark, and was beginning to wonder how I should find my way (not that I had lost it, having none to lose), when suddenly lights burst from every tree, and the whole place was illuminated. The nearest approach to this scene that I ever witnessed above ground was in a wood near The Hague in Holland. There, what look like tiny glass tumblers holding floating wicks are fastened to the trunks of the fine old trees, at intervals of sufficient distance to make the light and shade mysterious, and to give effect to the full blaze when you reach the spot where hanging chains of lamps

illuminate the "pavilion" and the open space where the band plays, and where the townsfolk assemble by hundreds to drink coffee and enjoy the music. I was the more reminded of the Dutch bosch because, after wandering some time among the lighted trees, I heard distant sounds of music, and came at last upon a glade lit up in a similar manner, except that the whole effect was incomparably more brilliant.

'As I stood for a moment doubting whether I should proceed, and a good deal puzzled about the whole affair, I caught sight of a large spider crouched up in a corner with his stomach on the ground and his knees above his head, as some spiders do sit, and looking at me, as I fancied, through a pair of spectacles. (About the spectacles I do not feel sure. It may have been two of his bent legs in apparent connection with his prominent eyes.) I thought of the beetle, and said civilly: "Can you tell me, sir, if this is fairyland?" The spider took off his spectacles (or untucked his legs) and took a sideways run out of his corner.

""Well," he said, "it's a province. The fact is, it's the Land of Lost Toys. You haven't such a thing as a fly anywhere about you, have you?"

"No," I said, "I'm sorry to say I have not." This was not strictly true, for I was not at all sorry; but I wished to be civil to the old gentleman, for he projected his eyes at me with such an intense (I had almost said greedy) gaze that I felt quite frightened.

"How did you pass the sentries?" he inquired.

"I never saw any," I answered.

"You couldn't have seen anything if you didn't see them," he said; "but perhaps you don't know. They're the glow-worms. Six to each tree, so they light the road, and challenge the passers-by. Why didn't they challenge you?"

"I don't know," I began, "unless the beetle——"
"I don't like beetles," interrupted the spider, stretching each leg in turn by sticking it up above him, "all shell, and no flavour. You never tried walking on anything of that sort, did you?" and he pointed with one leg to a long thread that fastened a web above his head.
""Certainly not" said I

"Certainly not," said I.

"I'm afraid it wouldn't bear you," he observed slowly.
"I'm quite sure it wouldn't," I hastened to reply. "I wouldn't try for worlds. It would spoil your pretty work in a moment. Good evening."

'And I hurried forward. Once I looked back, but the spider was not following me. He was in his hole again, on his stomach, with his knees above his head, and looking (apparently through his spectacles) down the road up which I came.

'I soon forgot him in the sight before me. I had reached the open place with the lights and the music; but how shall I describe the spectacle that I beheld?

'I have spoken of the effect of a toyshop on my feelings. Now imagine a toy-fair, brighter and gayer than the brightest bazaar ever seen, held in an open glade, where forest trees stood majestically behind the glittering stalls, and stretched their gigantic arms above our heads, brilliant with a thousand hanging lamps. At the moment of my entrance all was silent and quiet. The toys lay in their places looking so incredibly attractive that I reflected with disgust that all my ready cash, except one shilling and some coppers, had melted away amid the tawdry fascinations of a village booth. I was counting the coppers (sevenpence halfpenny), when all in a moment a dozen sixpenny fiddles leaped from their



See page 163 'WELL,' HE SAID, . . . 'IT'S THE LAND OF LOST TOYS'



places and began to play, accordions of all sizes joined them, the drumsticks beat upon the drums, the penny trumpets sounded, and the yellow flutes took up the melody on high notes and bore it away through the trees. It was weird fairy-music, but quite delightful. The nearest approach to it that I know of above ground is to hear a wild dreamy air very well whistled to a pianoforte accompaniment.

'When the music began, all the toys rose. The dolls jumped down and began to dance. The poodles barked, the pannier donkeys wagged their ears, the windmills turned, the puzzles put themselves together, the bricks built houses, the balls flew from side to side, the battledores and shuttlecocks kept it up among themselves, and the skippingshuttlecocks kept it up among themselves, and the skipping-ropes went round, the hoops ran off, and the sticks ran after them, the cobbler's wax at the tails of all the green frogs gave way, and they jumped at the same moment, whilst an old-fashioned go-cart ran madly about with nobody inside. It was most exhilarating.

'I soon became aware that the beetle was once more at my elbow.

"There are some beautiful toys here," I said.
"Well, yes," he replied, "and some odd-looking ones
too. You see, whatever has been really used by any child
as a plaything gets a right to come down here in the end;
and there is some very queer company, I assure you. Look there."

'I looked, and said: "It seems to be a potato."

"So it is," said the beetle. "It belonged to an Irish child in one of your great cities. But to whom the child belonged I don't know, and I don't think he knew himself. He lived in the corner of a dirty, overcrowded room, and into this corner, one day, the potato rolled. It was the only plaything he ever had. He stuck two cinders into it for

eyes, scraped a nose and mouth, and loved it. He sat upon it during the day for fear it should be taken from him, but in the dark he took it out and played with it. He was often hungry, but he never ate that potato. When he died it rolled out of the corner and was swept into the ashes. Then it came down here."

"What a sad story!" I exclaimed.

'The beetle seemed in no way affected.

"It is a curious thing," he rambled on, "that potato takes quite a good place among the toys. You see, rank and precedence down here is entirely a question of age; that is, of the length of time that any plaything has been in the possession of a child; and all kinds of ugly old things hold the first rank; whereas the most costly and beautiful works of art have often been smashed or lost by the spoilt children of rich people in two or three days. If you care for sad stories, there is another queer thing belonging to a child who died."

'It appeared to be a large sheet of canvas with some

strange kind of needlework upon it.

"It belonged to a little girl in a rich household," the beetle continued; "she was an invalid, and difficult to amuse. We have lots of her toys, and very pretty ones too. At last someone taught her to make caterpillars in wool-work. A bit of work was to be done in a certain stitch and then cut with scissors, which made it look like a hairy caterpillar. The child took to this, and cared for nothing else. Wool of every shade was procured for her, and she made caterpillars of all colours. Her only complaint was that they did not turn into butterflies. However, she was a sweet, gentle-tempered child, and she went on hoping that they would do so, and making new ones. One day she was heard talking and laughing in her bed for joy. She said

that all the caterpillars had become butterflies of many colours, and that the room was full of them. In that happy fancy she died."

"And the caterpillars came down here?"



"It belonged to a little girl in a rich household," the beetle continued

"Not for a long time," said the beetle; "her mother kept them while *she* lived, and then they were lost and came down. No toys come down here till they are broken or lost."

""What are those sticks doing here?" I asked.

'The music had ceased, and all the toys were lying quiet. Up in a corner leaned a large bundle of walking-sticks. They are often sold in toyshops, but I wondered on what grounds they came here.

"Did you ever meet with a too-benevolent old gentleman wondering where on earth his sticks go to?" said the beetle. "Why do they lend them to their grandchildren? The young rogues use them as hobby-horses and lose them, and down they come, and the sentinels cannot stop them. The real hobby-horses won't allow them to ride with them, however. There was a meeting on the subject. Every stick was put through an examination. 'Where is your nose? Where is your mane? Where are your wheels?' The last was a poser. Some of them had got noses, but none of last was a poser. Some of them had got noses, but none of them had got wheels. So they were not true hobby-horses. Something of the kind occurred with the elder-whistles."
"The what?" I asked.

"Whistles that boys make of elder-sticks with the pith scooped out," said the beetle. "The real instruments would not allow them to play with them. The elder-whistles said they would not have joined had they been asked. They were amateurs, and never played with professionals. So they have private concerts with the combs and curl-papers. But, bless you, toys of this kind are and curl-papers. But, bless you, toys of this kind are endless here! Teetotums made of old cotton-reels, teasets of acorn cups, dinner-sets of old shells, monkeys made of bits of sponge, all sorts of things made of breast-bones and merrythoughts, old packs of cards that are always building themselves into houses and getting knocked down when the band begins to play, feathers, rabbits' tails—"
"Ah! I have heard about the rabbits' tails," I said.
"There they are," the beetle continued; "and when the band plays you will see how they skip and run. I don't believe you would find out that they had no bodies, for my experience of a warren is, that when rabbits skip and run it is the tails chiefly that you do see. But of all the amateur toys the most successful are the boats. We have a lake for

toys the most successful are the boats. We have a lake for

our craft, you know, and there's quite a fleet of boats made out of old cork floats in fishing villages. Then, you see, the old bits of cork have really been to sea, and seen a good deal of service on the herring-nets, and so they quite take the lead of the smart shop ships, that have never been beyond a pond or a tub of water. But that's an exception.

Amateur toys are mostly very dowdy. Look at that box."

'I looked, thought I must have seen it before, and wondered why a very common-looking box without a lid should affect me so strangely, and why my memory should seem struggling to bring it back out of the past. Suddenly

it came to me—it was our old toy box.

'I had completely forgotten that nursery institution till recalled by the familiar aspect of the inside, which was papered with proof-sheets of some old novel on which black stars had been stamped by way of ornament. Dim memories of how these stars, and the angles of the box, and certain projecting nails interfered with the letterpress and defeated all attempts to trace the thread of the nameless narrative, stole back over my brain; and I seemed once more, with my head in the toy box, to beguile a wet afternoon by apoplectic endeavours to follow the fortunes of Sir Charles and Lady Belinda, as they took a favourable turn in the left-hand corner at the bottom of the trunk.

""What are you staring at?" said the beetle.
"It's my old toy box!" I exclaimed.
"The beetle rolled on to his back, and struggled helplessly with his legs; I turned him over. (Neither the first nor

the last time of my showing that attention to beetles.)

"That's right," he said, "set me on my legs. What a
turn you gave me! You don't mean to say you have any
toys here? If you have, the sooner you make your way home the better."

""Why?" I inquired.
""Well," he said "there's a very strong feeling in the place. The toys think that they are ill-treated, and not taken care of by children in general. And there is some truth in it. Toys come down here by scores that have been broken the first day. And they are all quite resolved that if any of their old masters or mistresses come this way they shall be punished."

"How will they be punished?" I inquired.

"Exactly as they did to their toys, their toys will do to them. All is perfectly fair and regular."

"I don't know that I treated mine particularly badly," I

said; "but I think I would rather go."

"I think you'd better," said the beetle.

evening!" and I saw him no more.

'I turned to go, but somehow I lost the road. At last, as I thought, I found it, and had gone a few steps when I came on a detachment of wooden soldiers, drawn up on their



.. up jumped a figure in a blue striped shirt . . .'

lazy tongs. I thought it better to wait till they got out of the way, so I turned back, and sat down in a corner in some alarm. As I did so, I heard a click, and the lid of a small box covered with mottled paper burst open, and up jumped a figure in a blue striped shirt and a rabbit-skin beard, whose eyes were intently fixed on me. He was very like my old jack-in-the-box. My back began to creep, and I wildly

meditated escape, frantically trying at the same time to recall whether it were I or my brother who originated the idea of making a small bonfire of our own one fifth of November, and burning the old jack-in-the-box for Guy Fawkes, till nothing was left of him but a twirling bit of red-hot wire and a strong smell of frizzled fur. At this moment he nodded to me and spoke.

"Oh! that's you, is it?" he said.

"No, it's not," I answered hastily; for I was quite demoralized by fear and the strangeness of the situation.

"Who is it, then?" he inquired.

"I'm sure I don't know," I said; and really I was so

confused that I hardly did.

"Well, we know," said the jack-in-the-box, "and that's all that's needed. Now, my friends," he continued, addressing the toys who had begun to crowd round us, "whoever recognizes a mistress and remembers a grudge—the hour of our revenge has come. Can we any of us forget the treatment we received at her hands? No! When we think of the ingenious fancy, the patient skill, that went to our manufacture; that fitted the delicate joints and springs, laid on the paint and varnish, and gave back-hair combs and earrings to our smallest dolls, we feel that we deserved more care than we received. When we reflect upon the kind friends who bought us with their money, and gave us away in the benevolence of their hearts, we know that for their sakes we ought to have been longer kept and better valued. And when we remember that the sole object of our own existence was to give pleasure and amusement to our possessors, we have no hesitation in believing that we deserved a handsomer return than to have had our springs broken, our paint dirtied, and our earthly careers so untimely shortened by wilful mischief or fickle neglect. My friends, the prisoner is at the bar."

"I am not," I said; for I was determined not to give in

as long as resistance was possible. But as I said it I became aware, to my unutterable amazement, that I was inside the go-cart. How I got there is to this moment a mystery to me—but there I was.

'There was a great deal of excitement about the jack-inthe-box's speech. It was evident that he was considered an orator, and, indeed, I have seen counsel in a real court look wonderfully like him. Meanwhile my old toys appeared to be getting together. I had no idea that I had had so many. I had really been very fond of most of them, and my heart beat as the sight of them recalled scenes long forgotten, and took me back to childhood and home. There were my little gardening tools, and my slate, and there was the big doll's bedstead, that had a real mattress, and real sheets and blankets, all marked with the letter D, and a work-basket made in the blind school, and a shilling School of Art paint-box, and a wooden doll we used to call the Dowager, and innumerable other toys which I had forgotten till the sight of them recalled them to my memory, but which have again passed from my mind. Exactly opposite to me stood the Chinese mandarin, nodding as I had never seen him nod since the day when I finally stopped his per-formances by ill-directed efforts to discover how he did it.

'And what was that familiar figure among the rest, in a yellow silk dress and maroon velvet cloak and hood trimmed with black lace? How those clothes recalled the friends who gave them to me! And surely this was no other than my dear doll Rosa—the beloved companion of five years of my youth, whose hair I wore in a locket after I was grown up. No one could say I had ill-treated her. Indeed, she fixed her eyes on me with a most encouraging smile—but then she always smiled, her mouth was painted so.

"All whom it may concern, take notice," shouted the

jack-in-the-box at this point, "that the rule of this honourable court is tit for tat."

"Tit, tat, tumble two," muttered the slate in a cracked voice. (How well I remembered the fall that cracked it, and the sly games of tit-tat that varied the monotony of our long multiplication sums!)
""What are you talking about?" said the jack-in-the-box

sharply; "if you have grievances, state them, and you shall

have satisfaction, as I told you before."

and five make nine," added the slate promptly, "and six are fifteen, and eight are twenty-seven—there we go again! I wonder why I never get up to the top of a line of figures right. It will never prove at this rate."

"His mind is lost in calculations," said the jack-in-the-box, "besides—between ourselves—he has been 'cracky' for some time. Let someone else speak, and observe that no one is at liberty to pass a sentence on the prisoner heavier than what he has suffered from her. I reserve my judgment to the last."

"I know what that will be," thought I; "oh, dear! oh, dear! that a respectable maiden lady should live to be burnt as a Guy Fawkes!"

"Let the prisoner drink a gallon of iced water at once,

and then be left to die of thirst."

'The horrible idea that the speaker might possibly have the power to enforce his sentence diverted my attention from the slate, and I looked round. In front of the jackin-the-box stood a tiny red flowerpot and saucer, in which was a miniature cactus. My thoughts flew back to a bazaar in London where, years ago, a stand of these fairy plants had excited my warmest longings, and where a benevolent old gentleman whom I had not seen before, and never saw again, bought this one and gave it to me. Vague

memories of his directions for repotting and tending it reproached me from the past. My mind misgave me that after all it had died a dusty death for lack of water. True, the cactus tribe being succulent plants do not demand much moisture, but I had reason to fear that, in this instance, the principle had been applied too far, and that after copious baths of cold spring water in the first days of its popularity it had eventually perished by drought. I suppose I looked guilty, for it nodded its prickly head towards me, and said: "Ah! you know me. You remember what I was, do you? Did you ever think of what I might have been? There was a fairy rose which came down here not long ago—a common rose enough, in a broken pot patched with string and white paint. It had lived in a street where it was the only pure beautiful thing your eyes could see. When the girl who kept it died there were eighteen roses upon it. She was eighteen years old, and they put the roses in the coffin with her when she was buried. That was worth coffin with her when she was buried. That was worth living for. Who knows what I might have done? And what right had you to cut short a life that might have been useful?"

'Before I could think of a reply to these too-just reproaches, the flowerpot enlarged, the plant shot up, putting forth new branches as it grew; then buds burst from the prickly limbs, and in a few moments there hung about it great drooping blossoms of lovely pink, with long white tassels in their throats. I had been gazing at it some time in silent and self-reproachful admiration, when I became aware that the business of this strange court was proceeding, and that the other toys were pronouncing sentence against me me.

"Tie a string round her neck and take her out bathing in the brooks," I heard an elderly voice say in severe tones.

It was the Dowager doll. She was inflexibly wooden, and

had been in the family for more than one generation.

"It's not fair," I exclaimed, "the string was only to keep you from being carried away by the stream. The current is strong and the bank steep by the Hollow Oak Pool, and you had no arms or legs. You were old and ugly, but you would wash, and we loved you better than many waxen beauties."

"Old and ugly!" shrieked the Dowager. "Tear her wig off! Scrub the paint off her face! Flatten her nose on the pavement! Saw off her legs and give her no crinoline! Take her out bathing, I say, and bring her home in a wheelbarrow with fern roots on the top of

her."

'I was about to protest again, when the paint-box came forward, and balancing itself in an artistic, undecided kind of way on two camel's-hair brushes which seemed to serve it for feet, addressed the jack-in-the-box.

"Never dip your paint into the water. Never put your

brush into your mouth-"

"'That's not evidence," said the jack-in-the-box.
"Your notions are crude," said the paint-box loftily; "it's in print, and here, all of it, or words to that effect"; with which he touched the lid, as a gentleman might lay his hand upon his heart.

"It's not evidence," repeated the jack-in-the-box.

us proceed."

"Take her to pieces and see what she's made of, if you please," tittered a pretty German toy that moved to a tinkling musical accompaniment. "If her works are available after that it will be an era in natural science."

'The idea tickled me, and I laughed.

"Hard-hearted wretch!" growled the Dowager doll.

"Dip her in water and leave her to soak on a white soup-plate," said the paint-box; "if that doesn't soften her feelings, deprive me of my medal from the School of Art!"

"Give her a stiff neck!" muttered the mandarin.

"Ching Fo! give her a stiff neck."

"Knock her teeth out," growled the rake in a scratchy voice; and then the tools joined in chorus:

"Take her out when it's fine and leave her out when it's wet, and lose her in-

"The coal-hole," said the spade.

"The hay-field," said the rake.

"The shrubbery," said the hoe.

'This difference of opinion produced a quarrel, which in turn seemed to affect the general behaviour of the toys, for a disturbance arose which the jack-in-the-box vainly endeavoured to quell. A dozen voices shouted for a dozen different punishments, and (happily for me) each toy insisted upon its own wrongs being the first to be avenged, and no one would hear of the claims of anyone else being attended to for an instant. Terrible sentences were passed, which I either failed to hear through the clamour then, or have forgotten now. I have a vague idea that several voices cried that I was to be sent to wash in somebody's pocket; that the workbasket wished to cram my mouth with unfinished needlework; and that through all the din the thick voice of my old leather ball monotonously repeated:

"Throw her into the dust-hole."

'Suddenly a clear voice pierced the confusion, and Rosa

tripped up.

'My dears," she began, "the only chance of restoring order is to observe method. Let us follow our usual rule of precedence. I claim the first turn as the prisoner's oldest toy."

"That you are not, miss," snapped the Dowager; "I was in the family for fifty years."

"In the family. Yes, ma'am; but you were never her doll in particular. I was her very own, and she kept me longer than any other plaything. My judgment must be first."

"She is right," said the jack-in-the-box; "and now let us get on. The prisoner is delivered unreservedly into the hands of our trusty and well-beloved Rosa—doll of the first class-for punishment according to the strict law of tit for tat."

"I shall request the assistance of the pewter tea-things," said Rosa, with her usual smile. "And now, my love," she added, turning to me, "we will come and sit down."

'Where the go-cart vanished to I cannot remember nor how I got out of it; I only know that I suddenly found myself free, and walking away with my hand in Rosa's. I remember vacantly feeling the rough edge of the stitches on her flat kid fingers, and wondering what would come next.

"How very oddly you hold your feet, my dear," she said; "you stick out your toes in such an eccentric fashion, and you lean on your legs as if they were table legs, instead of supporting yourself by my hand. Turn your heels well out, and bring your toes together. You may even let them fold over each other a little; it is considered to have a pretty effect among dolls."

'Under one of the big trees Miss Rosa made me sit down, propping me against the trunk as if I should otherwise have fallen; and in a moment more a square box of pewter tea-things came tumbling up to our feet, where the lid burst open, and all the tea-things fell out in perfect order; the cups on the saucers, the lid on the teapot, and so on.

"Take a little tea, my love?" said Miss Rosa, pressing a pewter tea-cup to my lips.

'I made believe to drink, but was only conscious of



'I made believe to drink ... ?

inhaling a draught of air with a slight flavour of tin. taking my second cup I was nearly choked with the tea-spoon, which got into my throat. ""What are you doing?" roared the jack-in-the-box at

this moment; "you are not punishing her."

"I am treating her as she treated me," answered Rosa, looking as severe as her smile would allow. "I believe that tit for tat is the rule, and that at present it is my turn."

"It will be mine soon," growled the jack-in-the-box, and I thought of the bonfire with a shudder. However, there was no knowing what might happen before his turn did come, and meanwhile I was in friendly hands. It was not the first time my dolly and I had sat together under a tree, and, truth to say, I do not think she had any injuries to avenge.

"When your wig comes off," murmured Rosa, as she stole a pink kid arm tenderly round my neck, "I'll make you a cap with blue-and-white rosettes, and pretend that you

have had a fever."

'I thanked her gratefully, and was glad to reflect that I was not yet in need of an attention which I distinctly remember having shown to her in the days of her dollhood.

Presently she jumped up.

"I think you shall go to bed now, dear," she said, and, taking my hand once more, she led me to the big doll's bedstead, which, with its pretty bedclothes and white dimity furniture, looked tempting enough to a sleeper of suitable size. It could not have supported one quarter of my weight.

"I have not made you a night-dress, my love," Rosa continued; "I am not fond of my needle, you know. You were not fond of your needle, I think. I fear you must go

to bed in your clothes, my dear."

"You are very kind," I said, "but I am not tired, and-

it would not bear my weight."
"Pooh! pooh!" said Rosa. "My love! I remember passing one Sunday in it with the rag doll, and the Dowager, and the Punch and Judy (the amount of pillow their two noses took up I shall never forget!), and the old doll that had nothing on, because her clothes were in the dolls' wash and did not get ironed on Saturday night, and the highlander, whose things wouldn't come off, and who slept in his kilt. Not bear you? Nonsense! You must go to bed, my dear. I've got other things to do, and I can't leave you lying about."

"The whole lot of you did not weigh one quarter of what I do," I cried desperately. "I cannot and will not get into that bed; I should break it all to pieces, and hurt

myself into the bargain."

"Well, if you will not go to bed I must put you there," said Rosa, and without more ado she snatched me up in her kid arms, and laid me down.

'Of course it was just as I expected. I had hardly touched the two little pillows (they had a meal-baggy smell from being stuffed with bran) when the woodwork gave way with a crash, and I fell—fell—fell——

'Though I fully believed every bone in my body to be broken, it was really a relief to get to the ground. As soon as I could, I sat up, and felt myself all over. A little stiff, but, as it seemed, unhurt. Oddly enough, I found that I was back again under the tree; and more strange still, it was not the tree where I sat with Rosa, but the old oak-tree in the little wood. Was it all a dream? The toys had vanished, the lights were out, the mosses looked dull in the growing dusk, the evening was chilly, the hole no larger than it was thirty years ago, and when I felt in my pocket for my spectacles I found that they were on my nose.

'I have returned to the spot many times since, but I never

'I have returned to the spot many times since, but I never could induce a beetle to enter into conversation on the subject, the hole remains obstinately impassable, and I have not been able to repeat my visit to the Land of Lost Toys.

'When I recall my many sins against the playthings of my childhood, I am constrained humbly to acknowledge that perhaps this is just as well.'

# SAM SETS UP SHOP

'I think you might help me, Dot,' cried Sam, in dismal

and rather injured tones.

It was the morning following the day of the earthquake, and of Aunt Penelope's arrival. Sam had his back to Dot, and his face to the fire, over which indeed he had bent for so long that he appeared to be half roasted.

'What do you want?' asked Dot, who was working at a doll's night-dress that had for long been partly finished, and

now seemed in a fair way to completion.

'It's the glue-pot,' Sam continued. 'It does take so long to boil. And I have been stirring at the glue with a stick for ever so long to get it to melt. It is very hot work. I wish you would take it for a bit. It's as much for your good as for mine.'

'Is it?' said Dot.

'Yes it is, miss,' cried Sam. 'You must know I've got a splendid idea.'

'Not another earthquake, I hope?' said Dot, smiling.

'Now, Dot, that's truly unkind of you. I thought it was to be forgotten.'

'So it is,' said Dot, getting up. 'I was only joking.

What is the idea?'

'I don't think I shall tell you till I have finished my shop. I want to get to it now, and I wish you would take a turn at the glue-pot.'

Sam was apt to want a change of occupation. Dot, on the other hand, was equally averse from leaving what she was about till it was finished, so they suited each other like Jack Sprat and his wife. It had been an effort to Dot to leave the night-dress which she had hoped to finish at a sitting; but when she was fairly set to work on the glue business she never moved till the glue was in working order, and her face as red as a ripe tomato.

By this time Sam had set up business in the window-seat, and was fastening a large paper inscription over his shop.

It ran thus:

#### MR SAM

Dolls' Doctor and Toymender to Her Majesty the Queen, and all other Potentates

'Splendid!' shouted Dot, who was serving up the glue as if it had been a kettle of soup, and who looked herself very like an over-toasted cook.

Sam took the glue and began to bustle about.

'Now, Dot, get me all the broken toys and we'll see what we can do. And here's a second splendid idea. Do you see that box? Into that we shall put all the toys that are quite spoiled and cannot possibly be mended. It is to be called the Hospital for Incurables. I've got a placard for that. At least it's not written yet, but here's the paper, and perhaps you would write it, Dot, for I am tired of writing, and I want to begin the mending.

'For the future,' he presently resumed, 'when I want a doll to scalp or behead, I shall apply to the Hospital for Incurables, and the same with any other toy that I want to destroy. And you will see, my dear Dot, that I shall be quite a blessing to the nursery; for I shall attend the dolls

gratis, and keep all the furniture in repair.'

Sam really kept his word. He had a natural turn for mechanical work, and, backed by Dot's more methodical genius, he prolonged the days of the broken toys by skilful mending, and so acquired an interest in them which was still more favourable to their preservation. When his birthday came round, which was some months after these events, Dot (assisted by Mamma and Aunt Penelope) had prepared for him a surprise that was more than equal to any of his own 'splendid ideas.' The whole force of the toy cupboard was assembled on the nursery table, to present Sam with a fine box of joiner's tools as a reward for his services, Papa kindly acting as spokesman on the occasion.

And certain gaps in the china tea-set, some scars on the dolls' faces, and a good many new legs, both amongst the furniture and the animals, are now the only remaining

traces of Sam's earthquake.

# DADDY DARWIN'S DOVECOTE

## PREAMBLE

SUMMER'S afternoon. Early in the summer, and late in the afternoon; with odours and colours deepen-

ing, and shadows lengthening, towards evening.

Two gaffers gossiping, seated side by side upon a Yorkshire wall. A wall of sandstone of many colours, glowing redder and yellower as the sun goes down; well cushioned with moss and lichen, and deep set in rank grass on this side, where the path runs, and in blue hyacinths on that side, where the wood is, and where—on the grey and still naked branches of young oaks—sit divers crows, not less

solemn than the gaffers, and also gossiping.

One gaffer in workday clothes, not unpicturesque of form and hue. Grey, home-knit stockings, and coat and knee-breeches of corduroy, which takes tints from time and weather as harmoniously as wooden palings do; so that field labourers (like some insects) seem to absorb or mimic the colours of the vegetation round them and of their native soil. That is, on workdays. Sunday best is a different matter, and in this the other gaffer was clothed. He was dressed like the crows above him, fit excepted: the reason for which was, that he was only a visitor, a re-visitor to the home of his youth, and wore his Sunday (and funeral) suit to mark the holiday.

Continuing the path, a stone pack-horse track, leading

past a hedge snow-white with may, and down into a little wood, from the depths of which one could hear a brook babbling. Then up across the sunny field beyond, and yet up over another field to where the brow of the hill is crowned

by old farm buildings standing against the sky.

Down this stone path a young man going whistling home to tea. Then staying to bend a swarthy face to the white may to smell it, and then plucking a huge branch on which the blossom lies like a heavy fall of snow, and throwing that aside for a better, and tearing off another and yet another, with the prodigal recklessness of a pauper; and so, whistling, on into the wood with his arms full,

Down the sunny field as he goes up it, a woman, coming to meet him—with her arms full. Filled by a child with a may-white frock, and hair shining with the warm colours of the sandstone. A young woman, having a fair forehead visible a long way off, and buxom cheeks, and steadfast eyes. When they meet he kisses her, and she pulls his dark hair and smooths her own, and cuffs him in country fashion. Then they change burdens, and she takes the may into her apron (stooping to pick up fallen bits), and the child sits on the man's shoulder, and cuffs and lugs its father as the mother did, and is chidden by her and kissed by him. And all the babbling of their chiding and crowing and laughter comes across the babbling of the brook to the ears of the old gaffers gossiping on the wall.

Gaffer I spits out an over-munched stalk of meadow soft-

grass and speaks:

'D'ye see yon chap?'

Gaffer II takes up his hat and wipes it round with a spotted handkerchief (for your Sunday hat is a heating thing for workday wear) and puts it on, and makes reply:

'Aye. But he beats me. And—see thee!—he's t'

first that's beat me yet. Why, lad! I've met young chaps to-day I could ha' sworn to for mates of mine forty year back—if I hadn't ha' been i' t' churchyard spelling over their fathers' tumstuns!'



Two gaffers gossiping

'Aye. There's a many old standards gone home o' lately.'

'What do they call him?'

'T' young chap?'

'Ave.'

'They call him—Darwin.'
'Dar—win? I should

know a Darwin. They're old standards, is Darwins. What's he to Daddy Darwin of t' Dovecote yonder?'



'He owns t' Dovecote. Did ye see t' lass?'

'Aye. Shoo's his missus, I reckon?'

'Aye.'

'What did they call her?'

'Phoebe Shaw they called her. And if she'd been my lass-but that's nother here nor there, and he's got t' Dovecote.'

'Shaw? They're old standards, is Shaws. Phoebe? They called her mother Phoebe. Phoebe Johnson. She were a dainty lass! My father were very fond of Phoebe Johnson. He said she allus put him i' mind of our orchard on drying days: pink and white apple blossom and clean clothes. And yon's her daughter? Where d'ye say t' young chap came from? He don't look like hereabouts.'

'He don't come from hereabouts. And yet he do come from hereabouts, as one may say. Look ye here. He come from t' wukhus. That's the short and the long of it.'

'The workhouse?'

'Aye.'

Stupefaction. The crows chattering wildly overhead. 'And he owns Darwin's Dovecote?'

'He owns Darwin's Dovecote.'

'And how i' t' name o' all things did that come about?'

'Why, I'll tell thee. It was o' this fashion.'

Not without reason does the wary writer put gossip in the mouths of gaffers rather than of gammers. Male gossips love scandal as dearly as female gossips do, and they bring to it the stronger relish and energies of their sex. But these were country gaffers, whose speech—like shadows—grows lengthy in the leisurely hours of eventide. The gentle reader shall have the tale in plain narration.

Note.—It will be plain to the reader that the birds here described are rooks (*Corvus frugilegus*). I have allowed myself to speak of them by their generic or family name of crow, this being a common country practice. The genus *Corvus*, or crow, includes the raven, the carrion crow, the hooded crow, the jackdaw, and the rook.

# SCENE I

One Saturday night (some eighteen years earlier than the date of this gaffer-gossiping) the parson's daughter sat in her own room before the open drawer of a bandy-legged black oak table, *balancing her bags*. The bags were moneybags, and the matter shall be made clear at once.

In this parish, as in others, progress and the multiplication of weapons with which civilization and the powers of goodness push their conquests over brutality and the powers of evil, had added to the original duties of the parish priest a multifarious and all but impracticable variety of offices; which, in ordinary and laic conditions, would have been performed by several more or less salaried clerks, bankers, accountants, secretaries, librarians, club-committees, teachers, lecturers, discount-for-ready-money dealers in

clothing, boots, blankets, and coal, domestic-servant agencies, caterers for the public amusement, and preservers of the public peace.

The country parson (no less than statesmen and princes, than men of science and of letters) is responsible for a great deal of his work that is really done by the helpmate—woman. This explains why five out of the young lady's money-bags bore the following inscriptions in marking-ink: 'Savings Bank,' 'Clothing Club,' 'Library,' 'Magazines and Hymn Books,' 'Three-halfpenny Club'—and only three bore reference to private funds, as 'House-money,' 'Allowance,' 'Charity.'

It was the bag bearing this last and greatest name which the parson's daughter now seized and emptied into her lap. A ten-shilling piece, some small silver, and twopence halfpenny jingled together, and roused a silver-haired, tawnypawed terrier, who left the hearth-rug and came to smell what was the matter. His mistress's right hand—absently caressing—quieted his feelings; and with the left she held the ten-shilling piece between finger and thumb, and gazed thoughtfully at the other bags as they squatted in a helpless row, with twine-tied mouths hanging on all sides. It was only after anxious consultation with an account book that the half-sovereign was exchanged for silver; thanks to the clothing-club bag, which looked leaner for the accommodation. In the three-halfpenny bag (which bulged with pence) some silver was further solved into copper, and the charity bag was handsomely distended before the whole lot was consigned once more to the table drawer.

Anyone accustomed to book-keeping must smile at this bag-keeping of accounts; but the parson's daughter could never 'bring her mind' to keeping the funds apart on paper, and mixing the actual cash. Indeed, she could never have

brought her conscience to it. Unless she had taken the tenth for 'charity' from her dress and pocket-money in coin, and put it then and there into the charity bag, this self-imposed rule of the duty of almsgiving would not have been

performed to her soul's peace.

The problem which had been exercising her mind that Saturday night was how to spend what was left of her benevolent fund in a treat for the children of the neighbouring workhouse. The fund was low, and this had decided the matter. The following Wednesday would be her twenty-first birthday. If the children came to tea with her, the foundation of the entertainment would, in the natural course of things, be laid in the vicarage kitchen. The charity bag would provide the extras of the feast. Nuts, toys, and the like.

When the parson's daughter locked the drawer of the bandy-legged table, she did so with the vigour of one who has made up her mind, and set about the rest of her Saturday

night's duties without further delay.

She put out her Sunday clothes, and her Bible and prayer book, and class-book and pencil, on the oak chest at the foot of the bed. She brushed and combed the silver-haired terrier, who looked abjectly depressed whilst this was doing, and preposterously proud when it was done. She washed her own hair, and studied her Sunday-school lesson for the morrow whilst it was drying. She spread a coloured quilt at the foot of her white one, for the terrier to sleep on—a slur which he always deeply resented.

Then she went to bed, and slept as one ought to sleep on Saturday night, who is bound to be at the Sunday-school by nine-fifteen on the following morning, with a clear mind on the Rudiments of the Faith, the history of the Prophet Elisha, and the destinations of each of the parish magazines.

# SCENE II

FATHERLESS—motherless—homeless!

A little workhouse boy, with a swarthy face and tidily cropped black hair, as short and thick as the fur of a mole, was grubbing, not quite so cleverly as a mole, in the workhouse garden.

He had been set to weed, but the weeding was very irregularly performed, for his eyes and heart were in the clouds, as he could see them over the big boundary wall. For there—now dark against the white, now white against the grey—some air tumbler pigeons were turning somersaults on their homeward way, at such short and regular intervals that they seemed to be tying knots in their lines of flight.

It was too much! The small gardener shamelessly abandoned his duties, and, curving his dirty paws on each side of his mouth, threw his whole soul into shouting words of encouragement to the distant birds.

'That's a good 'un! On with thee! Over ye go! 'Oo-oray!'

It was this last prolonged cheer which drowned the sound of footsteps on the path behind him, so that if he had been a tumbler pigeon himself he could not have jumped more nimbly when a man's hand fell upon his shoulder. Up went his arms to shield his ears from a well-merited cuffing; but Fate was kinder to him than he deserved. It was only an old man (prematurely aged with drink and consequent poverty) whose faded eyes seemed to rekindle as he also gazed after the pigeons, and spoke as one who knows.

'Yon's Daddy Darwin's tumblers.'

This old pauper had only lately come into 'the House' (the house that never was a home!), and the boy clung



'Yon's Daddy Darwin's tumblers'

eagerly to his flannel sleeve, and plied him thick and fast with questions about the world without the workhouse walls, and about the happy owner of those yet happier creatures who were free not only on earth but in the skies.

The poor old pauper was quite as willing to talk as the

boy was to listen. It restored some of that self-respect which we lose under the consequences of our follies to be able to say that Daddy Darwin and he had been mates together, and had had pigeon-fancying in common 'many a long year afore' he came into the House.

And so these two made friendship over such matters as will bring man and boy together to the end of time. And the old pauper waxed eloquent on the feats of homing birds and tumblers, and on the points of almonds and barbs, fantails and pouters; sprinkling his narrative also with high-sounding and heterogeneous titles as dragons and archangels blue owls and black priests, jacobins, English horsemen, and trumpeters. And through much boasting of the high stakes he had had on this and that pigeon-match then, and not a few bitter complaints of the harsh hospitality of the House he 'had come to' now, it never seemed to occur to him to connect the two, or to warn the lad who hung upon his lips that one cannot eat his cake with the rash appetites of youth, and yet hope to have it for the support and nourishment of his old age.

The longest story the old man told was of a 'bit of a trip' he had made to Liverpool, to see some Antwerp carriers flown from thence to Ghent, and he fixed the date of this by remembering that his twin sons were born in his absence, and that though their birthday was the very day of the race, his 'missus turned stoopid,' as women (he warned the boy) are apt to do, and refused to have them christened by uncommon names connected with the fancy. All the same, he bet the lads would have been nicknamed the Antwerp carriers, and known as such to the day of their death, if this had not come so soon and so suddenly, of croup; when (as it oddly chanced) he was off on another 'bit of a holiday' to fly some pigeons of his own in Lincolnshire.

This tale had not come to an end when a voice of authority called for 'Jack March,' who rubbed his mole-like head and went ruefully off, muttering that he should 'catch it now.'

'Sure enough! sure enough!' chuckled the unamiable

old pauper.

But again Fate was kinder to the lad than his friend. His negligent weeding passed unnoticed, because he was wanted in a hurry to join the other children in the schoolroom. The parson's daughter had come, the children were about to sing to her, and Jack's voice could not be dispensed with.

He 'cleaned himself' with alacrity, and taking his place in the circle of boys standing with their hands behind their backs, he lifted up a voice worthy of a cathedral choir, whilst varying the monotony of sacred song by secretly snatching at the tail of the terrier as it went snuffing round the legs of the group. And in this feat he proved as much superior to the rest of the boys (who also tried it) as he excelled them in the art of singing.

Later on he learnt that the young lady had come to invite them all to have tea with her on her birthday. Later still he found the old pauper once more, and questioned him closely about the village and the vicarage, and as to which

of the parishioners kept pigeons, and where.

And when he went to his straw bed that night, and his black head throbbed with visions and high hopes, these were not entirely of the honour of drinking tea with a pretty young lady, and how one should behave himself in such abashing circumstances. He did not even dream principally of the possibility of getting hold of that silver-haired, tawny-pawed dog by the tail under freer conditions than those of this afternoon, though that was a refreshing thought.

What kept him long awake was thinking of this. From

the top of an old walnut-tree at the top of a field at the back of the vicarage, you could see a hill, and on the top of the hill some farm buildings. And it was here (so the old pauper had told him) that those pretty pigeons lived, who, though free to play about among the clouds, yet condescended to make an earthly home—in Daddy Darwin's Dovecote.

### SCENE III

Two and two, girls and boys, the young lady's guests marched down to the vicarage. The schoolmistress was anxious that each should carry his and her tin mug, so as to give as little trouble as possible; but this was resolutely declined, much to the children's satisfaction, who had their walk with free hands, and their tea out of tea-cups and saucers like anybody else.

It was a fine day, and all went well. The children enjoyed themselves, and behaved admirably into the bargain. There was only one suspicion of misconduct, and the matter was so far from clear that the parson's daughter hushed it

up, and, so to speak, dismissed the case.

The children were playing at some game in which Jack March was supposed to excel, but when they came to look for him he could nowhere be found. At last he was discovered, high up among the branches of an old walnuttree at the top of the field, and though his hands were unstained and his pockets empty, the gardener, who had been the first to spy him, now loudly denounced him as an ungrateful young thief. Jack, with swollen eyes and cheeks besmirched with angry tears, was vehemently declaring that he had only climbed the tree to 'have a look at Master Darwin's pigeons,' and had not picked so much as a leaf, let alone a walnut; and the gardener, 'shaking the truth out

of him' by the collar of his fustian jacket, was preaching loudly on the sin of adding falsehood to theft, when the parson's daughter came up and, in the end, acquitted poor Jack, and gave him leave to amuse himself as he pleased.

It did not please Jack to play with his comrades just then.

He felt sulky and aggrieved. He would have liked to play with the terrier who had stood by him in his troubles, and barked at the gardener; but that little friend now trotted after his mistress, who had gone to choir-practice.

Jack wandered about among the shrubberies. By and by he heard sounds of music, and led by these he came to a gate in a wall, dividing the vicarage garden from the churchyard.



He was sitting in the porch, ... bewailing in bitterness of spirit ...

Jack loved music, and the organ and the voices drew him on till he reached the church porch; but there he was startled by a voice that was not only not the voice of song, but was the utterance of a moan so doleful that it seemed the outpouring of all his own lonely, and outcast, and injured feelings in one comprehensive howl.

It was the voice of the silverhaired terrier. He was sitting in the porch, his nose up, his ears down, his eyes shut, his mouth open, bewailing in bitterness of spirit the second and greater crook of his lot.

To what purpose were all the caresses and care and in-



The parson's daughter was at the organ

dulgence of his mistress, the daily walks, the weekly washings and combings, the constant companionship, when she betrayed her abiding sense of his inferiority, first, by not letting him sleep on the white quilt, and secondly, by never allowing him to go to church?

Jack shared the terrier's mood. What were tea and plum cake to him, when his pauper breeding was so stamped upon him that the gardener was free to say: 'A nice tale too! What's thou to do wi' doves, and thou a work'us lad?'—and to take for granted that he would thieve and lie if he got the chance?

His disabilities were not the dog's, however. The parish church was his as well as another's, and he crept inside and

leaned against one of the stone pillars, as if it were a big, calm friend.

Far away, under the transept, a group of boys and men held their music near to their faces in the waning light. Among them towered the burly choir-master, baton in hand. The parson's daughter was at the organ. Well accustomed to produce his voice to good purpose, the choir-master's words were clearly to be heard throughout the building, and it was on the subject of articulation and emphasis, and the like, that he was speaking; now and then throwing in an extra aspirate in the energy of that enthusiasm without which teaching is not worth the name.

'That'll not do. We must have it altogether different. You two lads are singing like bumble-bees in a pitcher—horder there, boys!—it's no laughing matter—put down those papers and keep your eyes on me—inflate the chest' (his own seemed to fill the field of vision) 'and try and give forth those noble words as if you'd an idea what they

meant.'

No satire was intended or taken here, but the two boys, who were practising their duet in an anthem, laid down the music, and turned their eyes on their teacher.

'I'll run through the recitative,' he added, 'and take

your time from the stick. And mind that OH.'

The parson's daughter struck a chord, and then the burly

choir-master spoke with the voice of melody:

'My heart is disquieted within me. My heart—my heart is disquieted within me. And the fear of death is fallen—is fallen upon me.'

The terrier moaned without, and Jack thought no boy's voice could be worth listening to after that of the choirmaster. But he was wrong. A few more notes from the organ, and then, as night-stillness in a wood is broken by



"... take your time from the stick"

the nightingale, so upon the silence of the church a boyalto's voice broke forth in obedience to the choir-master's uplifted hand:

'Then, I said-I said-'

Jack gasped, but even as he strained his eyes to see what such a singer could look like, with higher, clearer notes the

soprano rose above him. 'Then I sa-a-id,' and the

duet began:

'Oh that I had wings—Oh that I had wings like a dove!'

Soprano. 'Then would I flee away.' Alto. 'Then would I flee away.' Together. 'And be at rest—flee away and be at rest.'

The clear young voices soared and chased each other among the arches, as if on the very pinions for which they prayed. Then—swept from their seats by an upward sweep of the choir-master's arms—the chorus rose, as birds rise, and carried on the strain.

It was not a very fine composition, but this final chorus had the singular charm of fugue. And as the voices mourned like doves, 'Oh that I had wings!' and pursued each other with the plaintive passage, 'Then would I flee away—away,' Jack's ears knew no weariness of the repetition. It was strangely like watching the rising and falling of Daddy Darwin's pigeons, as they tossed themselves by turns upon their homeward flight.

After the fashion of the piece and period, the chorus was repeated, and the singers rose to supreme effort. The choir-master's hands flashed hither and thither, controlling, inspiring, directing. He sang among the tenors.

Jack's voice nearly choked him with longing to sing too. Could words of man go more deeply home to a young heart

caged within workhouse walls?

'Oh that I had wings like a dove! Then would I flee away,' the choir-master's white hands were fluttering downwards in the dusk, and the chorus sank with them, 'flee away and be at rest!'

## SCENE IV

Jack March had a busy little brain, and his nature was not of the limp type that sits down with a grief. That most memorable tea-party had fired his soul with two distinct ambitions. First, to be a choir-boy; and, secondly, to dwell in Daddy Darwin's Dovecote. He turned the matter over in his mind, and patched together the following facts:

The Board of Guardians meant to apprentice him, Jack,

The Board of Guardians meant to apprentice him, Jack, to some master, at the earliest opportunity. Daddy Darwin (so the old pauper told him) was a strange old man, who had come down in the world, and now lived quite alone, with not a soul to help him in the house or outside it. He was 'not to say mazelin yet, but getting helpless, and uncommon mean.'

A nephew came one fine day and fetched away the old pauper, to his great delight. It was by their hands that Jack dispatched a letter, which the nephew stamped and posted for him, and which was duly delivered on the following morning to Mr Darwin of the Dovecote.'

The old man had no correspondents, and he looked long at the letter before he opened it. It did credit to the teach-

ing of the workhouse schoolmistress:

# 'Honoured Sir,

'They call me Jack March. I'm a workhouse lad, but, Sir, I'm a good one, and the Board means to 'prentice me next time. Sir, if you face the Board and take me out you shall never regret it. Though I says it as shouldn't I'm a handy lad. I'll clean a floor with anyone, and am willing to work early and late, and at your time of life you're not what you was, and them birds must take a deal of seeing to. I can see them from the garden when I'm set to weed, and

I never saw naught like them. Oh, Sir, I do beg and pray you let me mind your pigeons. You'll be none the worse of a lad about the place, and I shall be happy all the days of my life. Sir, I'm not unthankful, but, please God, I should like to have a home, and to be with them house-doves.

'From your humble servant—hoping to be—
'Jack March.

'Mr Darwin, Sir. I love them tumblers as if they was my own.'

Daddy Darwin thought hard and thought long over that letter. He changed his mind fifty times a day. But Friday was the Board day, and when Friday came he 'faced the Board.' And the little workhouse lad went home to Daddy Darwin's Dovecote.

## SCENE V

The bargain was oddly made, but it worked well. Whatever Jack's parentage may have been (and he was named after the stormy month in which he had been born), the blood that ran in his veins could not have been beggars' blood. There was no hopeless, shiftless, invincible idleness about him. He found work for himself when it was not given him to do, and he attached himself passionately and proudly to all the belongings of his new home.

'Yon lad of yours seems handy enough, Daddy-for a

vagrant, as one may say.'

Daddy Darwin was smoking over his garden wall, and Mrs Shaw, from the neighbouring farm, had paused in her walk for a chat. She was a notable housewife, and there was just a touch of envy in her sense of the improved appearance of the doorsteps and other visible points of the Dovecote. Daddy Darwin took his pipe out of his mouth

to make way for the force of his reply:

'Vagrant! Nay, missus, yon's no vagrant. He's fettling up all along. Jack's the sort that if he finds a key he'll look for the lock; if ye give him a knife-blade he'll fashion a heft. Why, a vagrant's a chap that, if he'd all your maester owns to-morrow, he'd be on the tramp again afore t' year were out, and three years wouldn't repair t' mischief he'd leave behind him. A vagrant's a chap that if ye lend him a thing he loses it; if ye give him a thing he abuses it——'

'That's true enough, and there's plenty servant-girls the

same,' put in Mrs Shaw.

'Maybe there be, ma'am—maybe there be: vagrants' children, I reckon. But you little chap I got from t' House comes of folk that's had stuff o' their own, and cared for it—choose who they were.'

'Well, Daddy,' said his neighbour, not without malice, 'I'll wish you a good evening. You've got a good bargain

out of the parish, it seems.'

But Daddy Darwin only chuckled, and stirred up the ashes in the bowl of his pipe.

'The same to you, ma'am—the same to you. Aye! he's

a good bargain—a very good bargain is Jack March.'

It might be supposed from the foregoing dialogue that Daddy Darwin was a model householder, and the little workhouse boy the neatest creature breathing. But the gentle reader who may imagine this is much mistaken.

Daddy Darwin's Dovecote was freehold, and when he inherited it from his father there was still attached to it a good bit of the land that had passed from father to son through more generations than the church registers were old enough to record. But the few remaining acres were so heavily mortgaged that they had to be sold. So that a

bit of house property elsewhere, and the old homestead itself, were all that was left. And Daddy Darwin had never been the sort of man to retrieve his luck at home, or to seek it abroad.

That he had inherited a somewhat higher and more refined nature than his neighbours had rather hindered than helped him to prosper. And he had been unlucky in love. When what energies he had were in their prime, his father's death left him with such poor prospects that the old farmer to whose daughter he was betrothed broke off the match and married her elsewhere. His Alice was not long another man's wife. She died within a year from her wedding-day, and her husband married again within a year from her death. Her old lover was no better able to mend his broken heart than his broken fortunes. He only banished women from the Dovecote, and shut himself up from the coarse consolation of his neighbours.

In his loneliness, eating a kindly heart out in bitterness of

spirit, with all that he ought to have had

To plough and sow And reap and mow

gone from him, and in the hands of strangers; the pigeons, for which the Dovecote had always been famous, became the business and the pleasure of his life. But of late years his stock had dwindled, and he rarely went to pigeon-matches or competed in shows and races. A more miserable fancy rivalled his interest in pigeon-fancying. His new hobby was hoarding; and money that, a few years back, he would have freely spent to improve his breed of tumblers or back his homing birds, he now added with stealthy pleasure to the store behind the secret panel of a fine old oak bedstead that had belonged to the Darwyn who owned Dovecote

when the sixteenth century was at its latter end. In this bedstead Daddy slept lightly of late, as old men will, and he had horrid dreams, which old men need not have. The queer faces carved on the panels (one of which hid the money-hole) used to frighten him when he was a child. They did not frighten him now by their grotesque ugliness, but when he looked at them, and knew which was which, he dreaded the dying out of twilight into dark, and dreamed of aged men living alone, who had been murdered for their savings. These growing fears had had no small share in deciding him to try Jack March; and to see the lad growing stronger, nimbler, and more devoted to his master's interests day by day, was a nightly comfort to the poor old hoarder in the bed-head.

As to his keen sense of Jack's industry and carefulness, it was part of the incompleteness of Daddy Darwin's nature, and the ill luck of his career, that he had a sensitive perception of order and beauty, and a shrewd observation of ways of living and qualities of character, and yet had allowed his early troubles to blight him so completely that he never put forth an effort to rise above the ruin, of which he was at least as conscious as his neighbours.

That Jack was not the neatest creature breathing, one

That Jack was not the neatest creature breathing, one look at him, as he stood with pigeons on his head and arms and shoulders, would have been enough to prove. As the first and readiest repudiation of his workhouse antecedents he had let his hair grow till it hung in the wildest elf-locks, and though the terms of his service with Daddy Darwin would not, in any case, have provided him with handsome clothes, such as he had were certainly not the better for any attention he bestowed upon them. As regarded the Dovecote, however, Daddy Darwin had not done more than justice to his bargain. A strong and grateful attachment to

his master, and a passionate love for the pigeons he tended, kept Jack constantly busy in the service of both: the old pigeon-fancier taught him the benefits of scrupulous cleanliness in the pigeon-cote, and Jack 'stoned' the kitchen door and the doorsteps on his own responsibility.

The time did come when he tidied up himself.

## SCENE VI

Daddy Darwin had made the first breach in his solitary life of his own free will, but it was fated to widen. The parson's daughter soon heard that he had got a lad from the workhouse, the very boy who sang so well and had climbed the walnut-tree to look at Daddy Darwin's pigeons. The most obvious parish questions at once presented themselves to the young lady's mind. 'Had the boy been christened? Did he go to church and Sunday-school? Did he say his prayers and know his catechism? Had he a Sunday suit? Would he do for the choir?'

Then, supposing (a not uncommon case) that the boy had been christened, said he said his prayers, knew his catechism, and was ready for school, church, and choir, but had not got a Sunday suit—a fresh series of riddles propounded themselves to her busy brain. 'Would her father yield up his everyday coat and take his Sunday one into week-day wear? Could the charity bag do better than pay the tailor's widow for adapting this old coat to the new chorister's back, taking it in at the seams, turning it wrong side out, and getting new sleeves out of the old tails? Could she herself spare the boots which the village cobbler had just resoled for her—somewhat clumsily—and would the "allowance" bag bear this strain? Might she hope to coax an old pair of trousers out of her cousin, who was

spending his Long Vacation at the vicarage, and who never reckoned very closely with his allowance and kept no charity bag at all? Lastly, would "that old curmudgeon at the Dovecote" let his little farm-boy go to church and school and choir?"

'I must go and persuade him,' said the young lady.

What she said, and what (at the time) Daddy Darwin said, Jack never knew. He was at high sport with the terrier round the big sweetbrier bush, when he saw his old master splitting the seams of his weather-beaten coat in the haste with which he plucked crimson clove carnations as if they had been dandelions, and presented them, not ungracefully, to the parson's daughter.

Jack knew why she had come, and strained his ears to catch his own name. But Daddy Darwin was promising

pipings of the cloves.

'They are such dear old-fashioned things,' said she,

burying her nose in the bunch.

'We're old-fashioned altogether here, miss,' said Daddy Darwin, looking wistfully at the tumbledown house behind them.

'You're very pretty here,' said she, looking also, and thinking what a sketch it would make, if she could keep on friendly terms with this old recluse, and get leave to sit in the garden. Then her conscience smiting her for selfishness, she turned her big eyes on him and put out her small hand.

'I am very much obliged to you, Mr Darwin, very much obliged to you indeed. And I hope that Jack will do credit to your kindness. And thank you so much for the cloves,' she added, hastily changing a subject which had cost some argument, and which she did not wish to have reopened.

Daddy Darwin had thoughts of reopening it. He was

slowly getting his ideas together to say that the lad should see how he got along with the school before trying the choir, when he found the young lady's hand in his, and had to take care not to hurt it, whilst she rained thanks on him for the flowers.

'You're freely welcome, miss,' was what he did say after all.

In the evening, however, he was very moody, but Jack was dying of curiosity, and at last could contain himself no longer.

'What did Miss Jenny want, Daddy?' he asked.

The old man looked very grim.

'First to mak' a fool of me, and i' t' second place to mak' a fool of thee,' was his reply. And he added with pettish emphasis: 'They're all alike, gentle and simple. Lad, lad! if ye'd have any peace of your life never let a woman's foot across your threshold. Steek t' door of your house—if ye own one—and t' door o' your heart—if ye own one—and then ye'll never rue. Look at this coat!'

And the old man went grumpily to bed, and dreamed that Miss Jenny had put her little foot over this threshold, and that he had shown her the secret panel, and let her take away his savings.

And Jack went to bed, and dreamed that he went to school, and showed himself to Phoebe Shaw in his Sunday suit.

This dainty little damsel had long been making havoc in Jack's heart. The attraction must have been one of contrast, for whereas Jack was black and grubby, and had only week-day clothes—which were ragged at that—Phoebe was fair, and exquisitely clean, and quite terribly tidy. Her mother was the neatest woman in the parish. It was she who was wont to say to her trembling handmaid: 'I hope I

can black a grate without blacking myself.' But little Phoebe promised so far to outdo her mother, that it seemed doubtful if she could 'black herself' if she tried. Only the bloom of childhood could have resisted the polishing effects of yellow soap, as Phoebe's brow and cheeks did resist it. Her shining hair was compressed into a plait that would have done credit to a rope-maker. Her pinafores were speckless, and as to her white Whitsun frock—Jack could think of nothing the least like Phoebe in that, except a snowy fantail strutting about the dovecote roof; and, to say the truth, the likeness was most remarkable.

It has been shown that Jack March had a mind to be master of his fate, and he did succeed in making friends with little Phoebe Shaw. This was before Miss Jenny's visit, but the incident shall be recorded here.

Early on Sunday mornings it was Jack's custom to hide his workday garb in an angle of the ivy-covered wall of the Dovecote garden, only letting his head appear over the top, from whence he watched to see Phoebe pass on her way to Sunday-school, and to bewilder himself with the sight of her starched frock, and her airs with her Bible and prayer book, and class-card, and clean pocket handkerchief.

Now, amongst the rest of her Sunday paraphernalia, Phoebe always carried a posy, made up with herbs and some strong-smelling flowers. Countrywomen take mint and southernwood to a long hot service, as fine ladies take smelling-bottles (for it is a pleasant delusion with some writers that the weaker sex is a strong sex in the working classes). And though Phoebe did not suffer from 'fainty feels' like her mother, she and her little playmates took posies to Sunday-school, and refreshed their nerves in the steam of question and answer, and hair-oil and corduroy, with all the airs of their elders.

One day she lost her posy on her way to school, and her loss was Jack's opportunity. He had been waiting half an hour among the ivy, when he saw her just below him, fuzzling round and round like a kitten chasing its tail. He sprang to the top of the wall.

'Have ye lost something?' he gasped.

'My posy,' said poor Phoebe, lifting her sweet eyes, which were full of tears.

A second spring brought Jack into the dust at her feet, where he searched most faithfully, and was wandering along the path by which she had come, when she called him back.

'Never mind,' said she. 'They'll most likely be dusty

by now.'

Jack was not used to think the worse of anything for a coating of dust; but he paused, trying to solve the perpetual problem of his situation, and find out what the little maid really wanted.

"Twas only old man and marigolds,' said she. 'They're

common enough.'

A light illumined Jack's understanding.

'We've old man i' plenty. Wait, and I'll get thee a

fresh posy.' And he began to reclimb the wall.

But Phoebe drew nearer. She stroked down her frock, and spoke mincingly but confidentially. 'My mother says Daddy Darwin has red bergamot i' his garden. We've none i' ours. My mother always says there's nothing like red bergamot to take to church. She says it's a deal more refreshing than old man, and not so common. My mother says she's always meaning to ask Daddy Darwin to let us have a root to set; but she doesn't often see him, and when she does she doesn't think on. But she always says there's nothing like red bergamot, and my Aunt Nancy, she says the same.'



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'HAVE YE LOST SOMETHING?' HE GASPED



'Red is it?' cried Jack. 'You wait there, love.' And before Phoebe could say him nay, he was over the wall and back again with his arms full.

'Is it any o' this lot?' he inquired, dropping a small hay-

cock of flowers at her feet.

'Don't ye know one from t' other?' asked Phoebe, with round eyes of reproach. And spreading her clean kerchief on the grass she laid her Bible and prayer book and classcard on it, and set vigorously and nattily to work, picking one flower and another from the fragrant confusion, nipping the stalks to even lengths, rejecting withered leaves, and instructing Jack as she proceeded.

'I suppose ye know a rose? That's a Double Velvet.¹ They dry sweeter than lavender for linen. These dark red things is pheasants' eyes: but dear, dear, what a lad! Ye've dragged it up by the roots! And eh! what will Master Darwin say when he misses these pink hollyhocks? And only in bud, too! There's red bergamot; ² smell it!'

It had barely touched Jack's willing nose when it was hastily withdrawn. Phoebe had caught sight of Polly and Susan Smith coming to school, and crying that she should be late and must run, the little maid picked up her paraphernalia (not forgetting the red bergamot), and fled down the lane. And Jack, with equal haste, snatched up the telltale heap of flowers and threw it into a disused pigsty, where it was unlikely that Daddy Darwin would go to look for his poor pink hollyhocks.

<sup>2</sup> Red bergamot, or twinflower: Monarda didyma.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Double Velvet, an old summer rose, not common now. It is described by Parkinson.

### SCENE VII

April was a busy month in the Dovecote. Young birds were chipping the egg, parent birds were feeding their young or relieving each other on the nest, and Jack and his

master were constantly occupied and excited.

One night Daddy Darwin went to bed; but, though he was tired, he did not sleep long. He had sold a couple of handsome but quarrelsome pigeons to advantage, and had added their price to the hoard in the bed-head. This had renewed his old fears, for the store was becoming very valuable; and he wondered if it had really escaped Jack's quick observation, or whether the boy knew about it, and, perhaps, talked about it. As he lay and worried himself he fancied he heard sounds without—the sound of footsteps and of voices. Then his heart beat till he could hear nothing else; then he could undoubtedly hear nothing at all; then he certainly heard something, which probably was rats. And so he lay in a cold sweat, and pulled the rug over his face, and made up his mind to give the money to the parson, for the poor, if he was spared till daylight.

He was spared till daylight, and had recovered himself, and settled to leave the money where it was, when Jack rushed in from the pigeon-house with a face of dire dismay. He made one or two futile efforts to speak, and then unconsciously used the words Shakespeare has put into the mouth of Macduff: 'All my pretty 'uns!' and so burst into

tears.

And when the old man made his way to the pigeon-house, followed by poor Jack, he found that the eggs were cold and the callow young shivering in deserted nests, and that every bird was gone. And then he remembered the robbers, and was maddened by the thought that whilst he

lay expecting thieves to break in and steal his money he had let them get safely off with his whole stock of pigeons.

Daddy Darwin had never taken up arms against his troubles, and this one crushed him. The fame and beauty of his house-doves were all that was left of prosperity about the place, and now there was nothing left—nothing! Below this dreary thought lay a far more bitter one, which he dared not confide to Jack. He had heard the robbers; he might have frightened them away; he might at least have given the lad a chance to save his pets and not a care had crossed his mind except for the safety of his own old bones, and of those miserable savings in the bed-head, which he was enduring so much to scrape together (oh satire!) for a distant connection whom he had never seen. He crept back to the kitchen, and dropped in a heap upon the settle, and muttered to himself. Then his thoughts wandered. Supposing the pigeons were gone for good, would he ever make up his mind to take that money out of the money-hole and buy a fresh stock? He knew he never would, and shrank into a meaner heap upon the settle as he said so to himself. He did not like to look his faithful lad in the face.

Jack looked him in the face, and, finding no help there, acted pretty promptly behind his back. He roused the parish constable, and fetched that functionary to the Dovecote before he had had bite or sup to break his fast. He spread a meal for him and Daddy and borrowed the Shaws' light cart whilst they were eating it. The Shaws were good farmer-folk, they sympathized most fully; and Jack was glad of a few words of pity from Phoebe. She said she had watched the pretty pets 'many a score of times,' which comforted more than one of Jack's heartstrings. Phoebe's mother paid respect to his sense and promptitude. He had acted exactly as she would have done.

'Daddy was right enough about yon lad,' she admitted. 'He's not one to let the grass grow under his feet.'

And she gave him a good breakfast whilst the horse was being 'pit to.' It pleased her that Jack jumped up and left half a delicious cold tea-cake behind him when the cartwheels grated outside. Mrs Shaw sent Phoebe to put the cake in his pocket, and 'the measter' helped Jack in and took the reins. He said he would 'see Daddy Darwin through it,' and added the weight of his opinion to that of the constable, that the pigeons had been taken to 'a beastly low place' (as he put it) that had lately been set up for pigeon-shooting in the outskirts of the neighbouring town.

They paused no longer at the Dovecote than was needed to hustle Daddy Darwin on to the seat beside Master Shaw, and for Jack to fill his pockets with peas, and take his place beside the constable. He had certain ideas of his own on the matter, which were not confused by the jog-trot of the light cart, which did give a final jumble to poor Daddy Darwin's faculties.

No wonder they were jumbled! The terrors of the night past, the shock of the morning, the completeness of the loss, the piteous sight in the pigeon-house, remorseful shame, and then—after all these years, during which he had not gone half a mile from his own hearthstone—to be set up for all the world to see, on the front seat of a market-cart, back to back with the parish constable, and jogged off as if miles were nothing, and crowded streets were nothing, and the Beaulieu Gardens were nothing: Master Shaw talking away as easily as if they were sitting in two arm-chairs, and making no more of 'stepping into' a lawyer's office, and 'going on' to the town hall, than if he were talking of stepping up to his own bedchamber or going out into the garden!

That day passed like a dream, and Daddy Darwin remembered what happened in it as one remembers visions

of the night.

He had a vision (a very unpleasing vision) of the proprietor of the Beaulieu Gardens, a big greasy man, with sinister eyes very close together, and a hook nose, and a heavy watch-chain, and a bullying voice. He browbeat the constable very soon, and even bullied Master Shaw into silence. No help was to be had from him in his loud indignation as being supposed to traffic with thieves. When he turned the tables by talking of slander, loss of time, and compensation, Daddy Darwin smelt money, and tremblingly whispered to Master Shaw to apologize and get out of it. 'They're gone for good,' he almost sobbed, 'gone for good, like all t' rest! And I'll not be long after 'em.'

But even as he spoke he heard a sound which made him lift up his head. It was Jack's call at feeding-time to the pigeons at the Dovecote. And quick following on this most musical and most familiar sound there came another. The old man put both his lean hands behind his ears to be sure that he heard it aright—the sound of wings—the wings of

a dove!

The other men heard it and ran in. Whilst they were wrangling, Jack had slipped past them, and had made his way into a wired enclosure in front of the pigeon-house. And there they found him, with all the captive pigeons coming to his call: flying, fluttering, strutting, nestling from head to foot of him, he scattering peas like hail.

He was the first to speak, and not a choke in his voice. His iron temperament was at white heat, and, as he afterwards said, he 'cared no more for you dirty chap wi' the big

nose, nor if he were a ratten 1 in a hayloft!"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Anglice, rat.



'These is ours,' he said shortly. 'I'll count 'em over, and see if they're right. There was only one young 'un that could fly. A white 'un.' ('It's here,' interpolated Master Shaw.) 'I'll pack 'em i' yon,' and Jack turned his thumb to a heap of hampers in a corner. 'T' carrier can leave t' baskets at t' toll-bar next Saturday, and ye may send your lad for 'em, if ye keep one.'

The proprietor of the Beaulieu Gardens was not a man easily abashed, but most of the pigeons

were packed before he had fairly resumed his previous powers of speech. Then, as Master Shaw said, he talked 'on the other side of his mouth.' Most willing was he to help to bring to justice the scoundrels who had deceived him and robbed Mr Darwin, but he feared they would be difficult to trace. His own feeling was that of wishing for pleasantness among neighbours. The pigeons had been found at the Gardens. That was enough. He would be glad to settle the business out of court.

Daddy Darwin heard the chink of the dirty man's money, and would have compounded the matter then and there. But not so the parish constable, who saw himself famous; and not so Jack, who turned eyes of smouldering fire on

Master Shaw.

'Maester Shaw! you'll not let them chaps get off? Daddy's mazelin wi' trouble, sir, but I reckon you'll see to it.'

'If it costs t' worth of the pigeons ten times over I'll see

to it, my lad,' was Master Shaw's reply. And the parish constable rose even to a vein of satire as he avenged himself of the man who had slighted his office. 'Settle it out of court? Aye! I dare say. And send t' same chaps to fetch 'em away again t' night after. Nay—bear a hand



. . . there they found him, with all the captive pigeons coming to his call . . .

with this hamper, Measter Shaw, if you please—if it's all t' same to you, Mr Proprietor, I think we shall have to trouble you to step up to t' town hall by and by, and see if we can't get shut of them mistaking friends o' yours for

three month any way.'

If that day was a trying one to Daddy Darwin, the night that followed it was far worse. The thieves were known to the police, and the case was down to come on at the town hall the following morning; but meanwhile the constable thought fit to keep the pigeons under his own charge in the village lock-up. Jack refused to be parted from his birds, and remained with them, leaving Daddy Darwin alone in the Dovecote. He dared not go to bed, and it was not a pleasant night that he spent, dozing with weariness, and starting up with fright, in an arm-chair facing the moneyhole.

Some things that he had been nervous about he got quite used to, however. He bore himself with sufficient dignity in the publicity of the town hall, where a great sensation was created by the pigeons being let loose without, and coming to Jack's call. Some of them fed from the boy's lips, and he was the hero of the hour, to Daddy Darwin's

delight.

Then the lawyer and the lawyer's office proved genial and comfortable to him. He liked civil ways and smooth speech, and understood them far better than Master Shaw's brevity and uncouthness. The lawyer chatted kindly and intelligently; he gave Daddy wine and biscuit, and talked of the long standing of the Darwin family and its vicissitudes; he even took down some fat yellow books, and showed the old man how many curious laws had been made from time to time for the special protection of pigeons and dovecotes. Very ancient statutes making the killing of a house-dove

felony. Then I James I. c. 29 awarded three months' imprisonment 'without bail or mainprise' to any person who should 'shoot at, kill, or destroy with any gun, crossbow, stonebow, or longbow any house-dove or pigeon,' but allowed an alternative fine of twenty shillings to be paid to the churchwardens of the parish for the benefit of the poor. Daddy Darwin hoped there was no such alternative in this case, and it proved that by 2 Geo. III. c. 29 the twenty-shilling fine was transferred to the owner of birds; at which point another client called, and the polite lawyer left Daddy to study the laws by himself.

It was when Jack was helping Master Shaw to put the horse into the cart, after the trial was over, that the farmer said to him: 'I don't want to put you about, my lad, but I'm afraid you won't keep your master long. T' old gentleman's breaking up, mark my words! Constable and me was going into the George for a glass, and Master Darwin left us and went back to the office. I says: "What are ye going back to t' lawyer for?" and he says: "I don't mind telling you, Master Shaw, but it's to make my will." And off he goes. Now, there's only two more things between that and death, Jack March! And one's the parson and t' other's the doctor.'

## SCENE VIII

LITTLE Phoebe Shaw coming out of the day-school, and picking her way home to tea, was startled by folk running past her, and by a sound of cheering from the far end of the village, which gradually increased in volume, and was caught up by the bystanders as they ran. When Phoebe heard that it was 'Constable, and Master Shaw, and Daddy Darwin and his lad coming home, and the pigeons along wi'

'em,' she felt inclined to run too; but a fit of shyness came over her, and she demurely decided to wait by the school gate till they came her way. They did not come. They stopped. What were they doing? Another bystander explained: 'They're shaking hands wi' Daddy, and I reckon they're making him put up t' birds here, to see 'em go home to t' Dovecote.'

Phoebe ran as if for her life. She loved beast and bird as well as Jack himself, and the fame of Daddy Darwin's doves was great. To see them put up by him to fly home after such an adventure was a sight not lightly to be forgone. The crowd had moved to a hillock in a neighbouring field before she touched its outskirts. By that time it pretty well numbered the population of the village, from the oldest inhabitant to the youngest that could run. Phoebe had her mother's courage and resource. Chirping out feebly but clearly: 'I'm Maester Shaw's little lass, will ye let me through?' she was passed from hand to hand, till her little fingers found themselves in Jack's tight clasp, and he fairly lifted her to her father's side.

She was just in time. Some of the birds had hung about Jack, nervous, or expecting peas; but the hesitation was past. Free in the sweet sunshine—beating down the evening air with silver wings and their feathers like gold—ignorant of cold eggs and callow young dead in deserted nests—sped on their way by such a roar as rarely shook the village in its body corporate—they flew straight home—to Daddy Darwin's Dovecote.

## SCENE IX

DADDY DARWIN lived a good many years after making his will, and the Dovecote prospered in his hands. It would be more just to say that it prospered in the hands of Jack March. By hook and by crook he increased the live-stock about the place. Folk were kind to one who had set so excellent an example to other farm-lads, though he lacked the primal virtue of belonging to the neighbourhood. He bartered pigeons for fowls, and someone gave him a sitting of eggs to 'see what he would make of 'em.' Master Shaw gave him a little pig, with kind words and good counsel; and Jack cleaned out the disused pigsties, which were never disused again. He scrubbed his pigs with soap and water as if they had been Christians, and the admirable animals, regardless of the pork they were coming to, did him infinite credit, and brought him profit into the bargain, which he spent on ducks' eggs, and other additions to his farmyard family.

The Shaws were very kind to him; and if Mrs Shaw's secret must be told, it was because Phoebe was so unchangeably and increasingly kind to him, that she sent the pretty maid (who had a knack of knowing her own mind about

things) to service.

Jack March was a handsome, stalwart youth now, of irreproachable conduct, and with qualities which Mrs Shaw particularly prized; but he was but a farm-lad, and no match

for her daughter.

Jack only saw his sweetheart once during several years. She had not been well, and was at home for the benefit of 'native air.' He walked over the hill with her as they returned from church, and lived on the remembrance of that walk for two or three years more. Phoebe had given him

her prayer book to carry, and he had found a dead flower in it, and had been jealous. She had asked if he knew what it was, and he had replied fiercely that he did not, and was not sure that he cared to know.

'Ye never did know much about flowers,' said Phoebe

demurely. 'It's red bergamot.'

'I love—red bergamot,' he whispered penitently. 'And thou owes me a bit. I gave thee some once.' And Phoebe had let him put the withered bits into his own hymn book, which was more than he deserved.

Jack was still in the choir, and taught in the Sunday-school where he used to learn. The parson's daughter had had her way; Daddy Darwin grumbled at first, but in the end he got a bottle-green Sunday coat out of the oak press that matched the bedstead, and put the house-key into his pocket, and went to church too. Now, for years past he had not failed to take his place, week by week, in the pew that was traditionally appropriated to the use of the Darwins of Dovecote. In such an hour the sordid cares of the secret panel weighed less heavily on his soul, and the things that are not seen came nearer—the house not made with hands, the treasures that rust and moth corrupt not, and which thieves do not break through to steal.

Daddy Darwin died of old age. As his health failed, Jack nursed him with the tenderness of a woman; and kind inquiries, and dainties which Jack could not have cooked, came in from many quarters where it pleased the old man to find that he was held in respect and remembrance.

One afternoon, coming in from the farmyard, Jack found him sitting by the kitchen table as he had left him, but with a dread look of change upon his face. At first he feared there had been 'a stroke,' but Daddy Darwin's mind was clear and his voice firmer than usual.

'My lad,' he said, 'fetch me yon teapot out of the corner cupboard. T' one wi' a pole-house i painted on it, and some letters. Take care how ye shift it. It were t' merry feast-pot 2 at my christening, and yon's t' letters of my father's and mother's names. Take off t' lid. There's two bits of paper in the inside.'

Jack did as he was bid, and laid the papers (one small and yellow with age, the other bigger, and blue, and neatly

written upon) at his master's right hand.

'Read yon,' said the old man, pushing the small one towards him. Jack took it up wondering. It was the letter he had written from the workhouse fifteen years before. That was all he could see. The past surged up too thickly before his eyes, and tossing it impetuously from him, he dropped on a chair by the table, and snatching Daddy Darwin's hands he held them to his face with tears.

'God bless thee!' he sobbed. 'You've been a good

measter to me!'

'Daddy,' wheezed the old man. 'Daddy, not maester.' And drawing his right hand away, he laid it solemnly on the young man's head. 'God bless thee, and reward thee. What have I done o' my feckless life to deserve a son? But if ever a lad earned a father and a home, thou hast earned 'em, Jack March.'

He moved his hand again and laid it trembling on the

paper.

'Every word i' this letter ye've made good. Every word, even to t' bit at the end. "I love them tumblers as if they were my own," says you. Lift thee head, lad, and look at me. They are thy own! ... You blue paper's my last

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A 'pole-house' is a small dovecote on the top of a pole.
<sup>2</sup> 'Merry feast-pot' is a name given to old pieces of ware, made in local potteries for local festivals.

will and testament, made many a year back by Mr Brown, of Green Street, solicitor, and a very nice gentleman too; and witnessed by his clerks, two decent young chaps, and



"... I have left thee maester of Dovecote and all that I have"

civil enough, but with too much watch-chain for their situation. Jack March, my son, I have left thee maester of Dovecote and all that I have. And there's a bit of money in t' bed-head that'll help thee to make a fair start, and to

bury me decently atop of my father and mother. Ye may let Bill Sexton toll an hour-bell for me, for I'm an old standard, if I never were good for much. Maybe I might ha' done better if things had happened in a different fashion; but the Lord knows all. I'd like a hymn at the grave, Jack, if the vicar has no objections, and do thou sing if thee can. Don't fret, my son, thou'st no cause. 'Twas that sweet voice o' thine took me back again to public worship, and it's not t' least of all I owe thee, Jack March. A poor reason, lad, for taking up with a neglected duty—a poor reason—but the Lord is a God of mercy, or there'd be small chance for most on us. If Miss Jenny and her husband come to t' vicarage this summer, say I left her my duty and an old man's blessing; and if she wants any roots out of t' garden, give 'em her, and give her yon old chest that stands in the back chamber. It belonged to an uncle of my mother's—a Derbyshire man. They say her husband's a rich gentleman, and treats her very well. I reckon she may have what she's a mind, new and polished, but she's always for old lumber. They're a whimsical lot, gentle and simple. And talking of women, Jack, I've a word to say, if I can fetch my breath to say it. Lad! as sure as you're maester of Dovecote you'll give it a missus. Now take heed to me. If ye fetch any woman home here but Phoebe Shaw, I'll walk, and scare ye away from t' old place. I'm willing for Phoebe, and I charge ye to tell the lass so hereafter. And tell her it's not because she's fair—too many on 'em are that; and not because she's thrifty and houseproud-her mother's that, and she's no favourite of mine; but because I've watched her whenever t' ould cat's let her be at home, and it's my belief that she loves ye, knowing naught of this' (he laid his hand upon the will), 'and that she'll stick to ye, choose what her folk may say. Aye, aye,

she's not one of t'sort that quits a falling house—like rattens.'

Language fails to convey the bitterness which the old man put into these last two words. It exhausted him, and his mind wandered. When he had to some extent recovered himself he spoke again, but very feebly:

'Tak' my duty to the vicar, lad, Daddy Darwin's duty, and say he's at t' last feather of the shuttle, and would be

thankful for the sacrament.'

The parson had come and gone. Daddy Darwin did not care to lie down, he breathed with difficulty; so Jack made him easy in a big arm-chair, and raked up the fire with cinders, and took a chair on the other side of the hearth to watch with him. The old man slept comfortably, and at last, much wearied, the young man dozed also.

He awoke because Daddy Darwin moved, but for a moment he thought he must be dreaming. So erect the old man stood, and with such delight in his wide-open eyes.

They were looking over Jack's head.

All that the lad had never seen upon his face seemed to have come back to it—youth, hope, resolution, tenderness. His lips were trembling with the smile of acutest joy.

Suddenly he stretched out his arms, and crying 'Alice!' started forward and fell—dead on the breast of his adopted

son.

Craw! Craw! The crows flapped slowly home, and the gaffers moved off too. The sun was down, and 'damps' are bad for 'rheumatics.'

'It's a strange tale,' said Gaffer II, 'but if all's true ye tell

me, there's not too many like him.'

'That's right enough,' Gaffer I admitted. 'He's been

t' same all through, and ye should ha' seen the burying he gave t' ould chap. He was rare and good to him by all accounts, and never gainsaid him aught, except i' not lifting his voice as he should ha' done at t' grave. Jack sings a bass solo as well as any man i' t' place; but he stood yonder, for all t' world like one of them crows, black o' visage, and black wi' funeral clothes, and choked with crying like a child i'stead of a man.'

'Well, well, t' ould chap were all he had, I reckon,' said

Gaffer II.

'That's right enough; and for going backwards, as ye may say, and setting a wild graff on an old standard, yon will's done well for DADDY DARWIN'S DOVECOTE.'

## THREE CHRISTMAS TREES

THIS is a story of Three Christmas Trees. The first was a real one, but the child we are to speak of did not see it. He saw the other two, but they were not real; they only existed in his fancy. The plot of the story is very simple; and, as it has been described so early, it is easy for those who think it stupid to lay the book down in good time.

Probably every child who reads this has seen one Christmas tree or more; but in the small town of a distant colony with which we have to do, this could not at one time have been said. Christmas trees were then by no means so universal, even in England, as they now are, and in this little colonial town they were unknown. Unknown, that is, till the Governor's wife gave her great children's party.

At which point we will begin the story.

The Governor had given a great many parties in his time. He had entertained big wigs and little wigs, the passing military, and the local grandees. Everybody who had the remotest claim to attention had been attended to: the ladies had had their full share of balls and pleasure parties: only one class of the population had any complaint to prefer against his hospitality; but the class was a large one—it was the children. However, he was a bachelor, and knew little or nothing about little boys and girls: let us pity rather than blame him. At last he took to himself

a wife; and among the many advantages of this important step was a due recognition of the claims of these young citizens. It was towards happy Christmastide that 'the Governor's amiable and admired lady' (as she was styled in the local newspaper) sent out notes for her first children's party. At the top of the note-paper was a very red robin, who carried a blue Christmas greeting in his mouth, and at the bottom—written with the A.D.C.'s best flourish—were the magic words, A Christmas Tree. In spite of the flourishes—partly perhaps because of them—the A.D.C.'s handwriting, though handsome, was rather illegible. But for all this most of the children invited contrived to read these words, and those who could not do so were not slow to learn the news by hearsay. There was to be a Christmas Tree! It would be like a birthday party, with this above ordinary birthdays, that there were to be presents for everyone.

One of the children invited lived in a little white house, with a spruce fir-tree before the door. The spruce fir did this good service to the little house, that it helped people to find their way to it; and it was by no means easy for a stranger to find his way to any given house in this little town, especially if the house were small and white, and stood in one of the back streets. For most of the houses were small, and most of them were painted white, and back streets ran parallel with each other, and had no names, and were all so much alike that it was very confusing. For instance, if you had asked the way to Mr So-and-so's, it is very probable that some friend would have directed you as follows: 'Go straight forward and take the first turning to your left, and you will find that there are four streets, which run at right angles to the one you are in, and parallel with each other. Each of them has got a big pine in it—one of

the old forest trees. Take the last street but one, and the fifth white house you come to is Mr So-and-so's. He has green blinds and a coloured servant.' You would not always have got such clear directions as these, but with them you would probably have found the house at last, partly by accident, partly by the blinds and coloured servant. Some of the neighbours affirmed that the little white house had a name; that all the houses and streets had names, only they were traditional and not recorded anywhere; that very few people knew them, and nobody made any use of them. The name of the little white house was said to be Trafalgar Villa, which seemed so inappropriate to the modest, peaceful little home that the man who lived in it tried to find out why it had been so called. He thought that his predecessor must have been in the navy, until he found that he had been the owner of what is called a 'dry-goods store,' which seems to mean a shop where things are sold which are not good to eat or drink—such as drapery. At last somebody said that as there was a public-house called the Duke of Wellington at the corner of the street, there probably had been a nearer one called the Nelson, which had been burnt down, and that the man who built the Nelson had built the house with the spruce fir before it, and that so the name had arisen. An explanation which was just so far probable, that public-houses and fires were of frequent occurrence in those parts.

But this has nothing to do with the story. Only we must say, as we said before, and as we should have said had we been living there then, the child we speak of lived in the little white house with one spruce fir just in front of it.

Of all the children who looked forward to the Christmas tree, he looked forward to it the most intensely. He was an imaginative child, of a simple, happy nature, easy to

please. His father was an Englishman, and in the long winter evenings he would tell the child tales of the old country, to which his mother would listen also. Perhaps the parents enjoyed these stories the most. To the boy they were new, and consequently delightful, but to the parents they were old; and as regards some stories, that is better still.

'What kind of a bird is this on my letter?' asked the boy on the day which brought the Governor's lady's note of invitation. 'And oh! what is a Christmas tree?'

'The bird is an English robin,' said his father. 'It is quite another bird to that which is called a robin here: it is smaller and rounder, and has a redder breast and bright dark eyes, and lives and sings at home through the winter. A Christmas tree is a fir-tree—just such a one as that outside the door—brought into the house and covered with lights and presents. Picture to yourself our fir-tree lighted up with tapers on all the branches, with dolls, and trumpets, and bon-bons, and drums, and toys of all kinds hanging from it like fir-cones, and on the tiptop shoot a figure of a Christmas Angel in white, with a star upon its head.'

'Fancy!' said the boy.

And fancy he did. Every day he looked at the spruce fir, and tried to imagine it laden with presents, and brilliant with tapers, and thought how wonderful must be that 'old country'—Home, as it was called, even by those who had never seen it—where the robins were so very red, and where at Christmas the fir-trees were hung with toys instead of cones.

It was certainly a pity that, two days before the party, an original idea on the subject of snow men struck one of the children who used to play together with their sledges and snow-shoes, in the back streets. The idea was this: That

instead of having a commonplace snow man, whose legs were obliged to be mere stumps, for fear he should be topheavy, and who could not walk, even with them; who, in fact, could do nothing but stand at the corner of the street, holding his impotent stick, and staring with his pebble eyes, till he was broken to pieces or ignominiously carried away by a thaw—that, instead of this, they should have a real, live snow man, who should walk on competent legs, to the astonishment, and (happy thought!) perhaps to the alarm of the passers-by. This delightful novelty was to be accomplished by covering one of the boys of the party with snow till he looked as like a real snow man as circumstances would admit. At first everybody wanted to be the snow man, but, when it came to the point, it was found to be so much duller to stand still and be covered up than to run about and work, that no one was willing to act the part. At last it was undertaken by the little boy from the Fir House. He was somewhat small, but then he was so good-natured he would always do as he was asked. So he stood manfully still, with his arms folded over a walking-stick upon his breast, whilst the others heaped the snow upon him. The plan was not so successful as they had hoped. The snow would not stick anywhere except on his shoulders, and when it got into his neck he cried with the cold; but they were so anxious to carry out their project that they begged him to bear it 'just a little longer'; and the urchin who had devised the original idea wiped the child's eyes with his handkerchief, and (with that hopefulness which is so easy over other people's matters) 'dared say that when all the snow was on, he wouldn't feel it.' However, he did feel it, and that so severely that the children were obliged to give up the game, and, taking the stick out of his stiff little arms, to lead him home.

It appears that it is with snow men as with some other men in conspicuous positions. It is easier to find fault with them than to fill their place.

The end of this was a feverish cold, and, when the day of the party came, the ex-snow man was still in bed. It is due to the other children to say that they felt the disappointment as keenly as he did, and that it greatly damped the pleasure of the party for them to think that they had prevented his sharing in the treat. The most penitent of all was the deviser of the original idea. He had generously offered to stay at home with the little patient, which was as generously refused; but the next evening he was allowed to come and sit on his bed, and describe it all for the amusement of his friend. He was a quaint boy, this urchin, with a face as broad as an American Indian's, eyes as bright as a squirrel's, and all the mischief in life lurking about him, till you could see roguishness in the very folds of his hooded Indian winter coat of blue and scarlet. In his hand he brought the sick child's present: a dray with two white horses, and little barrels that took off and on, and a driver, with wooden joints, a cloth coat, and everything, in fact, that was suitable to the driver of a brewer's dray, except that he had blue boots and earrings, and that his hair was painted in braids like a lady's, which is clearly the fault of the doll manufacturers, who will persist in making them all of the weaker sex.

'And what was the Christmas tree like?' asked the invalid.

'Exactly like the fir outside your door,' was the reply.
'Just about that size, and planted in a pot covered with red cloth. It was kept in another room till after tea, and then when the door was opened it was like a street fire in the town at night—such a blaze of light—candles everywhere! And

on all the branches the most beautiful presents. I got a drum and a penwiper.'

'Was there an angel?' the child asked.

'Oh, yes!' the boy answered. 'It was on the tip-top branch, and it was given to me, and I brought it for you, if you would like it; for, you know, I am so very, very sorry I thought of a snow man and made you ill, and I do love you, and beg you to forgive me.'

And the roguish face stooped over the pillow to be kissed; and out of a pocket in the hooded coat came forth the Christmas Angel. In the face it bore a strong family likeness to the drayman, but its feet were hidden in folds of

snowy muslin, and on its head glittered a tinsel star.

'How lovely!' said the child. 'Father told me about this. I like it best of all. And it is very kind of you, for it is not your fault that I caught cold. I should have liked it if we could have done it, but I think to enjoy being a snow man, one should be snow all through.'

They had tea together, and then the invalid was tucked up for the night. The dray was put away in the cupboard,

but he took the angel to bed with him.

And so ended the first of the Three Christmas Trees.

Except for a warm glow from the wood fire in the stove, the room was dark; but about midnight it seemed to the child that a sudden blaze of light filled the chamber. At the same moment the window curtains were drawn aside, and he saw that the spruce fir had come close up to the panes and was peeping in. Ah! how beautiful it looked! It had become a Christmas tree. Lighted tapers shone from every familiar branch, toys of the most fascinating appearance hung like fruit, and on the tip-top shoot there stood

the Christmas Angel. He tried to count the candles but somehow it was impossible. When he looked at them they seemed to change places—to move—to become like the angel, and then to be candles again, whilst the flames nodded to each other and repeated the blue greeting of the robin, 'A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!' Then he tried to distinguish the presents, but, beautiful as the toys looked, he could not exactly discover what any of them were, or choose which he would like best. Only the Angel he could see clearly—so clearly! It was more beautiful than the doll under his pillow; it had a lovely face like his own mother's, he thought, and on its head gleamed a star far brighter than tinsel. Its white robes waved with the flames of the tapers, and it stretched its arms towards him with a smile.

'I am to go and choose my present,' thought the child; and he called 'Mother! Mother dear! please open the window.'

But his mother did not answer. So he thought he must get up himself, and with an effort he struggled out of bed.

But when he was on his feet, everything seemed changed! Only the firelight shone upon the walls, and the curtains were once more firmly closed before the window. It had been a dream, but so vivid that in his feverish state he still thought it must be true, and dragged the curtains back to let in the glorious sight again. The firelight shone upon a thick coating of frost upon the panes, but no further could he see, so with all his strength he pushed the window open and leaned out into the night.

The spruce fir stood in its old place; but it looked very beautiful in its Christmas dress. Beneath it lay a carpet of pure white. The snow was clustered in exquisite shapes upon its plumy branches; wrapping the tree top with its little cross shoots, as a white robe might wrap a figure with outstretched arms.

There were no tapers to be seen, but northern lights shot up into the dark blue sky, and just over the fir-tree shone a bright, bright star.

'Jupiter looks well to-night,' said the old professor in the town observatory, as he fixed his telescope; but to the child

it seemed as the star of the Christmas Angel.

His mother had really heard him call, and now came and put him back to bed again. And so ended the second of the Three Christmas Trees.

• • • •

It was enough to have killed him, all his friends said; but it did not. He lived to be a man, and—what is rarer—to keep the faith, the simplicity, the tender-heartedness, the vivid fancy of his childhood. He lived to see many Christmas trees 'at home,' in that old country where the robins are redbreasts, and sing in winter. There a heart as good and gentle as his own became one with his; and once he brought his young wife across the sea to visit the place where he was born. They stood near the little white house, and he told her the story of the Christmas trees.

'This was when I was a child,' he added.

'But that you are still,' said she; and she plucked a bit of the fir-tree and kissed it, and carried it away.

He lived to tell the story to his children, and even to his grandchildren; but he never was able to decide which of the two was the more beautiful—the Christmas Tree of his dream, or the Spruce Fir as it stood in the loveliness of that winter night.

This is told, not that it has anything to do with any of the Three Christmas Trees, but to show that the story is a happy one, as is right and proper; that the hero loved, and married, and had children, and was as prosperous as good people, in books, should always be.

Of course he died at last. The best and happiest of men must die; and it is only because some stories stop short in their history, that every hero is not duly buried before we

lay down the book.

When death came for our hero he was an old man. The beloved wife, some of his children, and many of his friends had died before him, and of those whom he had loved there were fewer to leave than to rejoin. He had had a short illness, with little pain, and was now lying on his deathbed in one of the big towns in the north of England. His youngest son, a clergyman, was with him, and one or two others of his children, and by the fire sat the doctor.

The doctor had been sitting by the patient, but now that he could do no more for him he had moved to the fire; and they had taken the ghastly, half-emptied medicine bottles from the table by the bedside, and had spread it with a fair linen cloth, and had set out the silver vessels of the Supper of the Lord.

The old man had been 'wandering' somewhat during the day. He had talked much of going home to the old country, and with the wide range of dying thoughts he had seemed to mingle memories of childhood with his hopes of paradise. At intervals he was clear and collected—one of those moments had been chosen for his last sacrament—and he had fallen asleep with the blessing in his ears.

He slept so long and so peacefully that the son almost began to hope that there might be a change, and looked towards the doctor, who still sat by the fire with his right leg crossed over his left. The doctor's eyes were also on the bed, but at that moment he drew out his watch and looked at it with an air of professional conviction, which said: 'It's only a question of time.' Then he crossed his left leg over his right, and turned to the fire again. Before the right leg should be tired, all would be over. The son saw it as clearly as if it had been spoken, and he too turned away and sighed.

As they sat, the bells of a church in the town began to chime for midnight service, for it was Christmas Eve, but they did not wake the dying man. He slept on and on.

The doctor dozed. The son read in the prayer book on

The doctor dozed. The son read in the prayer book on the table, and one of his sisters read with him. Another, from grief and weariness, slept with her head upon his shoulder. Except for a warm glow from the fire, the room was dark. Suddenly the old man sat up in bed, and, in a strong voice, cried with inexpressible enthusiasm:

'How beautiful!'

The son held back his sisters, and asked quietly:

'What, my dear Father?'

'The Christmas Tree!' he said in a low, eager voice. 'Draw back the curtains.'

They were drawn back; but nothing could be seen, and still the old man gazed as if in ecstasy.

'Light!' he murmured. 'The Angel! The Star!' Again there was silence; and then he stretched forth his

Again there was silence; and then he stretched forth his hands, and cried passionately:

'The Angel is beckoning to me! Mother! Mother

dear! Please open the window.'

The sash was thrown open, and all eyes turned involuntarily where those of the dying man were gazing. There was no Christmas tree—no tree at all. But over the house-tops the morning star looked pure and pale in the dawn of Christmas Day. For the night was past, and above the distant hum of the streets the clear voices of some waits

made the words of an old carol heard—words dearer for their association than their poetry:

While shepherds watched their flocks by night, All seated on the ground, The Angel of the Lord came down, And glory shone around.

When the window was opened, the soul passed; and when they looked back to the bed the old man had lain down again, and, like a child, was smiling in his sleep—his last sleep.

And this was the Third Christmas Tree.



